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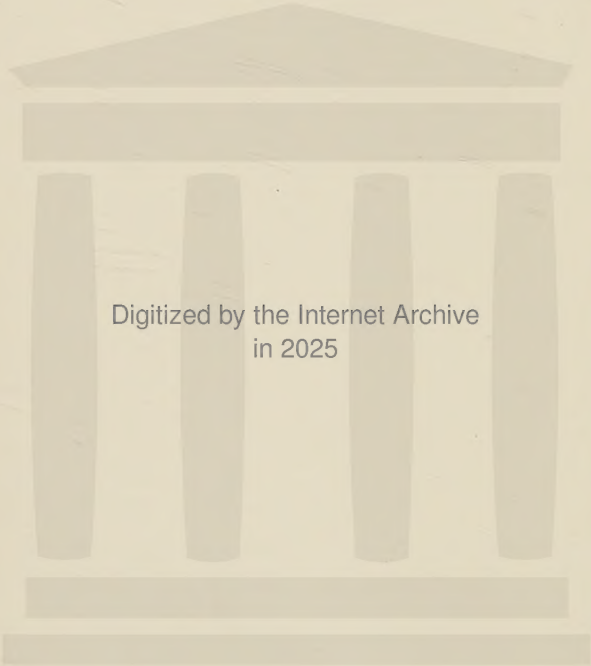

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ENGLISH LITERATURE

FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO CHAUCER

BY

WILLIAM HENRY SCHOFIELD, PH.D.

PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Out of olde feldes, as men seith,
Cometh al this newe corn fro yeer to yere;
And out of olde bokes, in good feith,
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.

CHAUCER, *Parlement of Foules.*

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TO

PROFESSOR GEORGE LYMAN KITTREDGE

IN GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION

PREFACE

THIS is the first of two volumes concerning the literary history of England from the Norman Conquest to the time of Elizabeth. It covers particularly the period down to the birth of Chaucer, but deals also with such later productions (romances, tales, legends, and the like) as are written in early mediæval styles. In treating the vernacular literature of this period I have adopted an arrangement which differs from any hitherto followed in a history of Middle English literature, though it is not uncommon in histories of contemporaneous works in Old French—that, namely, of bringing all writings of one kind together and tracing separately the evolution of each type. This method I decided upon, as Chaucer would say, "of ful avysement." After careful deliberation, it seemed to me to be the one most perspicuous and illuminating, because of the peculiar characteristics of the literary productions of the epoch: as I shall point out again in the Introduction, these are in large part anonymous in composition, impersonal in expression, international in currency, and static in type—wherefore their relations to one another are of a more intimate and persistent character within specific classes than at any later period of European history. Naturally, the second

volume will follow a different plan: after a broad consideration of the general tendencies of the era, it will treat particularly of the chief writings of prominent individuals, and will emphasise their personal qualities rather than the origin and development of their themes. In this first volume, it will be seen, nearly all of Chaucer's works are mentioned, because of their connection with earlier documents of similar kind; but no attempt is made to describe Chaucer as a person, to trace the growth of his powers, or to examine the characteristics of his art. The position of *Troilus and Cressida* in the history of the Troy-legend is indicated here, where it is a matter of genuine interest; and, consequently, irrelevant facts on this point will be omitted from the treatment of the poem as a literary creation when the suitable time comes to view it in that regard.

Not only in arrangement, but also in subject matter, I have ventured to differ from my predecessors, by considering attentively all works written in mediæval England, no matter in what language, and by comparing them with similar Continental productions. I have tried always to keep in mind the peculiar historical conditions which make familiarity with Old French literature necessary to an understanding of almost everything in the Middle English vernacular.

In order to counteract any confusion that a division of the matter according to its nature might occasion, I have appended a chronological table of all documents mentioned in the text, with as accurate a statement as is now possible of the dialect in which they were written. The extant manuscripts of mediæval works are so various, and show so much revision and transformation,

that in many cases it is extremely difficult, in some cases quite impossible, to determine either the age or the place of their original composition. Because of the uncertainty of our knowledge in this respect, and from the fact that it is the substance rather than the form of mediæval thought that is most valuable and interesting to us now, such details are of much less importance, even to the specialist, than at any other period of our literature ; and the average reader may neglect them with equanimity. For the convenience of those who may desire to prosecute further studies in this field, I have appended also a considerable body of bibliographical notes, which will serve as a guide to the best editions of the works discussed, arranged according to the same divisions that appear in the text. In the preparation of these appendices, which have caused no small amount of labour, I have had the advantage of competent assistance from Miss Muriel B. Carr and Mr. H. N. MacCracken, graduate students of Radcliffe College and Harvard University respectively, which assistance I would here gratefully acknowledge.

This book was undertaken with the warm encouragement of my revered master Gaston Paris, and follows in general outline the plan of his indispensable history of Old French literature. It is the fruit of studies begun under the inspiration of the late Professor Child, whom all of us his Harvard disciples hold in loving memory. And it has been brought to an end with the constant help of my former teacher and present colleague, Professor Kittredge, whose vast erudition, keen intelligence, and unfailing generosity astonish most those who know him best. Professor Charles Eliot Norton and others of my friends have done me the

favour to read portions of the book in proof, and have made valuable criticisms upon it. To them, one and all, I offer publicly my hearty thanks. Finally, I may say that I should perhaps never have written a volume like this at all had not the suggestion come from that high-minded and brilliant scholar, the Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, to whom the whole of the early period in this series was at first assigned, and who was prevented only by ill-health from treating it throughout with distinction.

W. H. S.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I

THE Norman Conquest inaugurated a distinctly new epoch in the literary as well as in the political history of England. Anglo-Saxon authors were then as suddenly and as permanently displaced as Anglo-Saxon kings. The literature afterwards read and written by Englishmen was thereby as completely transformed as the sentiments and tastes of English rulers. Clearly reflecting the altered attitude of the leaders of the people, the new styles of writing reveal in a measure the new national character, and betray important conditions determining its growth.

The Christian religion had been imposed on the Saxons by their leaders, working upon the common folk from the chieftains down. At first the alien creed was but superficially accepted. Little by little, however, the new instruction greatly modified men's religious ideas, and Roman definitely replaced Germanic ritual. Likewise, the foreign types of literature introduced at the Conquest first found favour with the monarchs and courtiers, and were deliberately fostered by them, to the disregard of native forms. No effective protest was possible, and English thought for centuries to come was largely fashioned in the manner of the French. Throughout the whole period that here engages our attention, in forms of artistic expression as well as of religious service, the English openly acknowledged a Latin control.

Nevertheless, though there was little independence in letters during this epoch, though it was not distinctively English as we now use the term, it is far from being the dull and barren stretch that so many literary historians would have us believe. If under Anglo-Norman rule compositions in the English vernacular were few and of slight account, this was certainly not occasioned by the people's inertia or distress, as the impression is often improperly given. Much to the contrary, the era was one of extraordinary intellectual activity, when, with greatly broadened horizons, with new interests awakened in Continental and Eastern affairs, constantly in contact with races of unlike temperament and tradition, Englishmen were in a state of growth and development when writing was inevitable, when some way of satisfying the demands of the many alert and prosperous who were eager for knowledge and entertainment had to be contrived, when patriotic sentiment demanded expression, abuses called for a pen to denounce, and abounding piety sought support in books.

What would have become of English literature had the foreign dominion not been established, no amount of speculation will ever determine. The fact is too often ignored that before 1066 the Anglo-Saxons had a body of native literature distinctly superior to any which the Normans or French could boast at that time: their prose especially was unparalleled for extent and power in any European vernacular. It should, moreover, be kept in mind how brilliant were the writings of the remote Norsemen during the eleventh and two succeeding centuries, how they in Iceland and the Western Isles, under conditions doubtless no more exceptional than might have developed in England, produced much noble poetry and marvellous prose that we still read with delight. But, while admitting the possibility of a revival of interest in literature amongst the English, one cannot deny that the Normans came to their land when they greatly needed an external stimulus; for ignorance was then rife in all parts, learning and culture were dying of inanition, and darkness seemed gathering round. The Conquest effected a wholesome

awakening of national life. The people were suddenly inspired by a new vision of a greater future. They united in a common hope. Sooner than is generally believed, the Saxon element lost its initial hostility to the new-comers, the bonds of sympathy growing with the realisation that the fortunes of both races were indissolubly knit, that all were anxious to maintain the dignity and integrity of the land. From the consequent blending of blood came a generation of increased power. From the incitement of opportunity came impulses to work. Capable and eager, the youth of the country strove for distinction; and reward was yielded richly to those who had the wisdom to seek it aright. Success, it was evident, lay not in harking back to a past from which the people was definitely severed, but in seizing the advantages of the present and reaching forward to those seemingly still more abundant in store. As a result of the Battle of Hastings, England was finally removed from isolation, and impelled into the strong currents of international life. The Anglo-Normans, possessed as they were of enthusiasm, energy, and executive skill, vied successfully with their Continental kin, and stirred their fellow-countrymen to like achievement. Literature could not but profit by the new sense of security and enlargement of view. The Conquerors not only brought with them soldiers and artisans and traders, they quickly imported scholars to revive knowledge, chroniclers to record memorable events, minstrels to celebrate victories, or sing of adventure and love. These gained a hearing and a following. Learning flourished anew, and writers multiplied.

The most obvious change in literary expression appears in the vehicle employed. For centuries Latin had been more or less spoken and written by the clergy in England. The Conquest, which led to the reinvigoration of the monasteries and the tightening of the ties with Rome, determined its more extensive use. Still more important, as a result of foreign sentiment in court and castle, it caused writings in the English vernacular to be disregarded, and established French as the natural speech of the cultivated and high-born. The clergy insisted on the use

of Latin, the nobility on the use of French: no one of influence saw the utility of English as a means of perpetuating thought, and for nearly three centuries very few works not deliberately devised for the ignorant laity appeared in the native vulgar tongue.

Those, meanwhile, who controlled the destinies of the kingdom, fought its battles, administered its laws, organised its churches, founded its schools, and worked otherwise for its welfare—all with one accord encouraged the vogue of French fashions without feeling that they did amiss. Thus not only the bias of prevailing attitude, but the stamp of English style, was incalculably changed. When the English language finally became supreme in England, it was employed primarily to perpetuate conceptions and methods of writing originally French. In process of time the foreign types, like the foreign words in the vocabulary, were accepted by high and low without demur.

To appreciate properly the significance of this substitution of foreign for native styles, the new trend of literary inclination that began soon after the Conquest, we must consider that in the early Middle Ages France was the literary centre of all Western Europe. Then, more than at any other period, she enjoyed an hegemony in the intellectual domain, and led the fashion in literary production. The epoch was one of new birth—of new trials and new successes. In every departure France seems to have anticipated the slower thought of other nations and discovered the paths which they later found it best to tread. She devised and others imitated. She set the standard, and by it all were measured. Surpassing any degree of influence to which she has since attained, her dominion was widespread and unquestioned. Fortunately, it was at this period, when the French genius appears effectively to have controlled Western ideas, that England was in closest contact with France. By reason of their language and political conditions, Englishmen were kept familiar with all contemporary thought. Their reading was substantially that of the rest of Europe.

If France was thus the supreme arbiter of European

literary styles, it was in part at least because the French writers were themselves cosmopolitan, because they were not provincial in sympathy or inhospitable to others' ideas. They had inherited, to be sure, a large body of epic verse concerning Charlemagne and his peers which was peculiarly theirs, and this they revived with zeal; so well, in fact, that, national as it was, foreign races repeated it readily and long. But they were not content to win admiration in this special province alone. Early they sought out other themes—stories of the Orient, of Greece and Rome, and ancient Britain—and so transformed these as to win still greater acclaim. One of the chief glories of Old French literature is the body of Arthurian romance which it presented to the world. But Arthur was originally a Celtic, not a French hero. The "Matter of Britain," which, through the medium of French redactions, was made accessible to all Europe and welcomed with rejoicing wherever it found its way, was a splendid contribution of France; but it was not hers by right of inheritance. The great poets of mediæval Germany, Hartmann von Aue, Gottfried von Strassburg, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and the rest, were essentially imitators of French writers, but imitated them, it should be noted, where they were themselves imitators—imitated works which were French not in substance but in form.

Partly owing to this situation, the distinctive characteristics of the literatures of different lands were in the Middle Ages far less marked than now. The various peoples of Europe had not as yet developed the striking peculiarities they at present exhibit. There was a general harmony of poetic impulse. Men everywhere sang under the same inspiration, and enjoyed one another's song. Their themes being usually such as came from an indistinct past; being in nowise more the possession of one race than another, nation did not rise up against nation to assert exclusive claims. In all lands primitive myth, Aryan folklore, the fables of remote ages, were handled with the freedom of acknowledged right, without a thought of dispute. Yet thus, in this handling, race distinctions gradually made themselves

manifest, and in course of time so fixed themselves upon the outcome of human thought that they assumed an appearance of their own, and were recognised as peculiar by common consent.

The interdependence of the different literatures of mediæval Europe is a matter of much moment in the study of any one of them. It makes the comparative method of inquiry essential to safe judgment. Middle English literature cannot be well understood without full familiarity with the sources from which it drew and some acquaintance with the history of the themes it favoured. It but echoes in the main the sentiments and tastes of an international society centralised in France.

Another striking characteristic of mediæval literature worth consideration at this point is its general anonymity. Of the many who wrote, the names of but few are recorded, and of the history of these few we have only the most meagre details. Nor is this a simple accident. Formerly, the importance attached to an author's personality was far less than now. In case either of a narrative or a didactic work, it was the substance above all that attracted attention. Originality of matter was deplored as a fault. Independence of treatment meant to our forefathers contempt of authority, a heinous offence in their eyes. It was as unsafe for a story-teller to depart from the well-marked lines of inherited tradition as for him to disregard orthodox beliefs. And even the greatest dared not present new views without at least claiming august support. A prudent author sought a powerful patron in order to ensure success, or fathered his inventions on some ancient worthy who could not deny them. But the last thing he would have deemed wise would have been to copyright them as his own.

Necessarily, then, most composition was impersonal. Rarely do popular mediæval works seem to have been called forth by the inner, the subjective feelings of their authors. They indicate prevailing ideals, tastes, or needs, but seldom the peculiar aspirations of an individual. We scrutinise them not so much to

discover the genius of particular men as the development of types; not so much to find out the qualities of him who wrote as those of the society that suggested the writing.

II

If now we inquire regarding that part of the Middle Ages in England which we are particularly to study, as a critic should in questioning any epoch: Who are the best exponents of its tastes and ideals? who most notably reflect its conditions? we discover that our concern is chiefly with representatives of the nobility and the clergy. The third "estate," the labourers, were not then producers of literature. They have, indeed, significance in our research, but almost solely because they perpetuated tradition. Poor and down-trodden, ignorant and illiterate, they were, nevertheless, the heirs of much ancient lore which delighted them worthily, and which, because of their retentive memories, reaches us even to-day, preserved in songs, ballads, and popular tales, still powerful to please when our jaded ears refuse to listen to the fine sophistications of the hour. The English folk always responded in song to tense emotional appeal. They were stirred to unified utterance by such local or national events as touched their hearts. They sang, we know, of Hereward, the valiant resister of the Conqueror's might, and of other outlawed heroes who strove against oppression. They sang of private griefs. And this, we may be sure, without ever ceasing, though historical records but rarely note their festival or funeral chants. From the Conquest to Chaucer, as indeed before and after, the combined dance and song of rustic folk was a conspicuous feature of English wayfaring life. The Battle of Bannockburn (1314) found the steadfast nation in the same mood as the Battle of Maldon (991). "After many days," says Fabyan, "it was sungyn in dances, in carolles of the maydens and mynstrellys of Scotland." Simple and sincere, the ballads of the people kept issuing forth from the living well-springs of poetic impulse, but for the most

part only to vanish again, like "the snows of yester year," leaving no definite trace. Literature as literature (except for the ballads) owes only a slight debt to the peasants, and we dismiss them from our more particular heed.

One fact, however, deserves emphasis here, namely, that in former times the tastes of the different ranks of society were not so unlike in character as in quality, that the lower classes enjoyed the same sort of literature as the nobility, only in a ruder form. When versions of sophisticated tales were prepared by men of humble origin for the lowly of the land, they were stripped of their polite embellishments and made straightforward and direct in style. The people were fond of sentiment but not of subtlety, of vigorous phrase but not of rhetoric, of proverbs rather than laboured conceits. They preferred narrative to disquisition, folklore to science. They liked to hear of princes and noble ladies when these were found to act according to homely ideals. They eagerly repeated tales of heroism and adventure when they could applaud with understanding. Thus, unconsciously, merely by the nature of their tastes, they determined the selection of works to be turned into the vernacular, as well as the fashion of their reproduction. Popular literature in the native tongue assumed a definite, democratic attitude and a rugged simplicity during the long period of its disregard by the nobility. When the rulers finally realised its richness and took an interest in its cultivation, it had passed beyond any narrow control, it had become English in the large sense of the word, a mirror of the whole nation's spirit and sensibility.

The patrons and producers of mediæval works, as has been said, belonged almost exclusively to the clergy and the nobles. In patronage credit seems about equal so far as amount of writing is concerned, but unequal if the estimate be based on its lasting worth. The didactic and religious works favoured by the monks were in the main far less original and less artistically valuable than the lays and romances especially

prepared for knights and ladies. Still, ecclesiastical and secular works were read by both classes alike. The nobles were frequently pious and learned, and priests as often frivolous and dense. The former kept clerks engaged at service in their castles, and the latter had minstrels regularly in their employ. Most writers, moreover, made a general appeal. The monks tried to produce legends and chronicles so interesting as to rival secular poems in popularity. The minstrels adorned the heathen narratives they treated with Christian sentiment, and found it expedient to point a moral in their loosest tales.

The Conquest had been the signal for a large increase in the number of castles and monasteries. These existed alongside of one another in all parts of the land. By the time of Stephen the embattled keeps of the feudal barons were so prominent everywhere that they threatened the power of the central government, and it was arranged by the treaty of Wallingford in 1153 that no less than 365 of them were to be destroyed—an agreement in part performed. Each knightly abode was a stimulus to literary production, for the residents felt the need of constant entertainment, and listened eagerly to invigorating stories of war and chivalry, or to such free tales as provoked unrestrained mirth when in the great hall after meat high and low enjoyed glee together. As gentleness and refinement increased, the nobles delighted more in the new courtly lays than in the communal epic songs of their past. The ladies they "served" became a literary force, and exerted their influence to procure poems embodying their conceptions, to gain a means of solace in the loneliness they were forced to endure when war called their husbands and lovers away.

Religious foundations likewise prospered abundantly in the new era. If in Pope Gregory's time Christian monks had gone to Britain say "threescore and ten persons," the Lord had made them almost "as the stars of heaven for multitude." Unlike, however, the mighty God of Israel whom they worshipped in name, "they regarded persons and took reward." Steadily,

therefore, they grew in wealth and worldly influence, until they became independent enough to dictate the sovereign's procedure, so strong as often to determine national policy. From the time of William the Conqueror to the accession of Henry III. (1216), according to Tanner, no less than 476 abbeys and priories were founded, besides 81 alien priories. Each of these was more or less a place of learning, many in the sense that there youths were given elementary instruction, as well as in that there also scholars prosecuted advanced inquiries in history and theology, and studied minutely the writings of the past.

The chief reproach of the monks, apart from their sensuality, was that they had too much of the "knowledge that puffeth up," and too little of "the charity that edifieth." It was to renew the spiritual vigour of the Church that order followed order in earnest foundation. But each in turn departed from the high principles of its builders, and the members neglected their devotions as their power increased. In 1170 the "holy athlete" St. Dominic was born; twelve years later the noble St. Francis, "all seraphic in zeal"; and each emulating the other strove in his own way for the purification of the ministry and the uplifting of his fellow-men. The Dominican friars came to England in 1220, the Franciscans in 1224. Their new organisations, marvellously successful at first, numbered among their adherents some of the leaders of English thought—Bishop Grosseteste, for example, and Roger Bacon, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. Yet once again success occasioned danger, and power to be exerted acted as a magnetic attraction to self-seeking men. The friars, it is well known, soon degenerated sadly, and by Chaucer's time their name even was a title to scorn. Throughout this whole period, however, despite the worldly lapses of the clergy, the monasteries and other religious foundations were the chief centres of civilisation, where the study of art, architecture, and music was encouraged, where books were collected, and scribes industriously wrote. Never, even in their days of greatest spiritual apathy, were the monks

wholly unfaithful to the ideals they professed. Always alongside of the lax and vicious were to be found the pure in heart and undefiled in deed. The amazing contrasts characteristic of the Middle Ages confront us here as everywhere: those who renounced the world became its guides, those who broke loose from the fetters of society were enslaved by cramping rules and creeds.

Outside of the cloisters, other servants of the Church laboured to the advantage of the people. Simple parish priests taught their flocks nobly by both precept and example, but only occasionally did any of the class, like Layamon, engage in literary work. Only in one instance, that of Richard Rolle, in the fourteenth century, do we find a hermit prolific as an author. But there was a large body of secular clergy who are most important to consider because of their relation to literature. The Church afforded the most convenient, at first almost the sole, means of gaining intellectual advancement. It included individuals of all stations in its ranks. Ambitious nobles of thoughtful spirit sought distinction through ecclesiastical preferment. The poor entered the clerical fold humbly, to free themselves from manual labour. There were large numbers of clerks who were untrammelled by the restrictions of the monks, and in the production of popular original works they played the chief part of all who wrote. Many of them had no great education, but they knew more of the world than most of their fellows. From wide travel and long sojourning in literary centres, they often attained to genuine enlightenment, and were an important factor in public progress.

Paris was the Mecca of the mediæval clerk. At its world-renowned university assembled students from remote regions, and there lived together in broadening, if sometimes tumultuous and sorry, conditions. The scholars were grouped into so-called "nations," men from definite districts flocking by themselves in habitation, but associating freely in lecture hall and public meeting. The English "nation" was one of the largest in the city, and harboured students from Scandinavia and Germany.

In the twelfth century the University of Paris was a place of fine stimulation, a meeting-ground of distinguished men, an exalted mart of thought. Crestien de Troyes reveals to us at the beginning of *Cligès* the opinion of the learned of his land that France had inherited the best traditions of antiquity. "This our books have taught us," he says, "that of chivalry and of clergy [*i.e.* learning] Greece had the highest praise. Afterwards to Rome came chivalry; and the height of clergy, which now hath passed to France. God grant that it here be retained, and the place please it so well that from France may never depart the honour which there has tarried. To others God had lent it; for of Greeks and Romans is said neither more nor less; of them has mention ceased, and extinguished is their vivid flame." With conscious dignity the clerks of Crestien's time wore the mantle of superiority which had, they thought, fallen upon them. Eagerly they strove not only to express in their own speech new ideas, but also to revive knowledge of the past, to reopen the treasure-house of forgotten wisdom, and to reveal its glories for the benefit of their own people. The widespread revival of interest in the past restored the study of the classics, and a genuine renaissance of antique culture got well under way. But the Church retarded its flowering time. True learning and illumination yielded to didacticism and prejudice. The University of Paris became eventually a place of subtle dialectics and sententious dispute, rather than of free, original thought.

In the thirteenth century, however, Paris was still in English esteem the focus of Western culture. Witness the words of Bartholomew, the English encyclopædist:

> In the same manner as the city of Athens shone in former days as the mother of liberal arts and the nurse of philosophers . . . so in our times Paris has raised the standard of learning and civilisation not only in France, but in all the rest of Europe, and, as the mother of wisdom, she welcomes guests from all parts of the world, supplies all their wants, and subjects them to her pacific rule.

Considerably later, in 1345, the renowned bibliophile Richard of Bury, Bishop of Durham, indulged in a like panegyric :

O Holy God of Gods in Sion, what a mighty stream of pleasure made glad our hearts whenever we had leisure to visit Paris, the paradise of the world, and to linger there, where the days seemed ever few for the greatness of our love !

But Richard had new conditions to remark that were important for English development.

Alas ! he exclaims, by the same disease which we are deploring [the lack of earnest devotion to study] we see that the Palladium of Paris has been carried off in these sad times of ours, wherein the zeal of that noble university, whose rays once shed light into every corner of the world, has grown lukewarm, nay, is all but frozen. There the pen of every scribe is now at rest ; generations of books no longer succeed each other ; and there is none who begins to take place as a new author. They wrap up their doctrines in unskilled discourse, and are losing all propriety of logic, except that our English subtleties, which they denounce in public, are the subject of their furtive vigils.

Admirable Minerva seems to bend her course to all nations of the earth, and reaches from end to end mightily, that she may reveal herself to all mankind. We see that she has already visited the Indians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians and Greeks, the Arabs and the Romans. . . . Now she has passed by Paris, and now has happily come to Britain, the most noble of islands, nay, rather a microcosm in itself, that she may show herself a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians. At which wondrous sight it is conceived by most men that as philosophy is now lukewarm in France, so her soldiery is unmanned and languishing.

There was much to warrant this boast. It was no longer necessary for Englishmen to cross the Channel for a good education. Oxford meanwhile and Cambridge had grown from preparatory schools for the University of Paris to dignified rivals. In England, in fact, early in the fourteenth century were to be found the intellectual compeers of any scholars in Europe, men of independence and virility, earnest in the search for truth.

Our concern here, however, is less with the clerks as scholars

than as men of letters. Some in petty official positions simply pursued the duties of their place, or did hack-work for their superiors. Some wrote more happily with higher patronage. Others, as it were free lances in society, wielded satirical, caustic pens, and frankly denounced or ridiculed whomsoever they would. The most cultivated of the clerks, men of the type of Crestien de Troyes and his fellow trouvères, strove deliberately for distinction of thought and grace of style. They craved an audience, and made their works as accessible as they could to "gentle readers." In various ways their poems might be published. The author himself no doubt would read them to select gatherings, as Froissart later is known to have done with his compositions. The knight's priest would repeat them privately to his master or the youths under his instruction, and cloistered monks perhaps to their fellows. Ladies-in-waiting would divert their mistresses while they sat embroidering, as Cressida's companion amused her by the Romance of Thebes before Pandarus appeared on his delicate mission. Sometimes books of great length would be gone through in serial reading night after night with a whole household assembled, or shorter poems recited on special occasions, by such as were skilled in the art.

Wide popularity a poem was slow to gain because of the difficulties of manuscript reproduction. The scriptorium yielded its fruit reluctantly. Only the fortunate could obtain copies of works they desired, and even the rich and powerful had but a small number in their possession. Sometimes, it seems, a single codex formed the whole library of a family, and was carefully cherished, slowly added to, and solemnly bequeathed from one generation to another. The so-called Auchinleck MS., written between 1330 and 1340, serves admirably to illustrate what such a volume might have been, how miscellaneous was the production of Middle English poetry, what sort of works were once thought of edifying import.

This beautifully written and illuminated parchment, now in the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh, contains over forty distinct

pieces, many short or fragmentary, others of great length. In disordered juxtaposition may there be found a number of legends of the Virgin and various saints, a vision of purgatory, bits of Bible history, and paraphrases of Scripture texts, a didactic treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins, a Debate between the Body and the Soul, a Dispute between a Thrush and a Nightingale respecting women, and a fragment in their praise, a lone fabliau "How a Merchant did his Wife betray," a chronicle of the kings of England, a list of names of Norman barons, and two satires on political conditions in the reign of Edward II. But the bulk is romance, and this of every provenience. The Carlovingian cycle is represented by the poems of *Roland and Vernagu* and *Otuel*; the Arthurian by the Breton lays of *Le Freine*, *Sir Orfeo*, *Sir Degare*, and the romances of *Sir Tristram* and *Arthur and Merlin*; English traditions by those of *Guy of Warwick* and his son *Reinbrun*, by *Beves of Hampton* and *Horn Child*; the matter of the East by an account of Alexander, and the originally Greek story of *Floris and Blancheflour*; together with the legendary romance of *Amis and Amiloun* and the Oriental collection of tales known as the *Seven Wise Masters*. Surely such a manuscript could afford pleasure to men in any mood, whatever their literary predilection. In the Library of Lincoln Cathedral is preserved a similar book written by a Yorkshireman, Robert Thornton, almost exactly a century later, which contains an equally miscellaneous but quite different collection of documents dealing with history, romance, religion, and medicine, though religion is the most prominent. The medley does certainly appear to us incongruous, but, as the editor of the romances in the manuscript observes:

> At a time when the library of the University of Oxford is said to have contained no more than two or three hundred chained books, a folio volume which could afford amusement in hall, instruction at other times, religious information, and perhaps consolation to the sick, and with all be produced as a medical authority for nearly every ill "that flesh is heir to," was not to be despised by a family resident in a remote part of the country, where, in all probability, literary luxuries were not readily accessible.

These two manuscripts seem to have been carefully prepared volumes of selected poetry for the use of readers, and not simply the written repertoires of professional reciters. They contain, along with commonplace productions by minstrel rhymers, works by careful trouvères, composed with the thrill of conscious art.

The type of mediæval trouvère may be said to have found its distinguished culmination in Chaucer. In one sense also he was a troubadour in that he, in a style reminiscent of the sophisticated lyrics of Provence, wrote intricate love-poetry for an esoteric cult. But he was so far removed from the ordinary minstrel of his time that he could parody the latter's methods with complete success. The style of writer, however, whom *Sir Thopas* presupposes was the degenerate scion of a noble house. The early minstrels were very important personages, and we must pay particular heed to them if we would get a proper picture of mediæval literary life.

III

On their arrival in England the Normans came into contact with singers of Celtic, Saxon, and Danish race, who were looked up to with respect. Among the Celts, above all, the bards were distinguished. The noblest aspired to win fame in this way, and kings deemed musical skill their finest ornament. In the Anglo-Saxon realm also, music and song were worthy pursuits. Even bishops, such as St. Aldhelm of Salisbury († 709) and St. Dunstan of Canterbury († 988), took delight in the harp. The Scandinavian skalds and *thulir* were men of great prominence, both honoured and feared by the chieftains they served.

After the Conquest, however, the popular poets and gleemen of previous times were more and more dismissed to obscurity, and their places were taken by minstrels of a new sort. We are not here concerned with the infinite number of jugglers, tumblers, contortionists, and mountebanks who congregated at places of assembly and entertained spectators by circus tricks; but rather

with those more self-respecting persons whose lives were devoted primarily to singing songs and making music, to reciting legends, romances, and tales. These were the connecting links of all classes of society. They were as various in their cultivation and ambitions as theatrical troupes or journalists to-day. Some appealed especially to the higher classes, some to the lower. Some were proud of occupying places of established dignity at court, castle, or monastery. Some revelled in a free, Bohemian life, and journeyed constantly from one place to another. Some enjoyed so fully the largess of munificent patrons that they could occupy estates of their own, or found hospitals from the fortunes they amassed. Some, unkempt and tattered, sang in the market-place, the ale-house, or the kitchen of the manor, for a charitable pittance. Some were as careless in style and unreliable in statement as others were fastidious and exact. The minstrels were as unlike in attitude and esteem as organ-grinders and street singers to-day differ from orchestral players and opera stars, or as the performers in cheap variety shows from the accomplished actors of our stage. They formed a class of society far more important than any that partly corresponds to them now, for they were poets, singers, musicians, actors, and reporters all combined. The best amongst them were subject to the temptations of our contemporaries so engaged. They wrote flattering works and advanced causes for mere monetary reward; they accepted bribes to praise officials who desired laudation in political crises; they pandered to sensuality, and encouraged luxury and display. The lower orders were more obviously vulgar. In personal character they were as often as not dissolute and corrupt, in speech irreverent and obscene.

What attitude the Church should adopt towards the minstrels was a troublesome question. From the earliest days of the Christian era, mirth-makers were under grave suspicion. Repeatedly enactments were directed against them. St. Augustine declared that generosity to minstrels was a fault; Alcuin urged caution in offering them hospitality. And such warnings grew increasingly numerous as their possible corrupting influences

became more manifest. But their popularity never diminished, and the clergy in England saw fit to make distinctions in favour of the better sort, while they earnestly denounced the baser. Bishop Grosseteste was one of the most strenuous in upholding the traditional opinion of the Church towards the class in general, and yet, according to Robert of Brunne, he was himself devoted to minstrelsy:

> He loved much to hear the harp,
> For man's wit it maketh sharp.
> Next his chamber, beside his study,
> His harper's chamber was fast thereby.
> Many times, by nights and days,
> He had solace of notes and lays.

When asked the reason why he had delight in minstrelsy, why he held the harper dear, Grosseteste defended himself by the example of David, who by harping worshipped the Heavenly King. The minstrels themselves met the attacks upon them by the relation of many instances in which members of their class had been openly favoured by the Holy Virgin, whose cult they zealously maintained. Of a harper of Rochester, for example, they related a pious legend how, when once blown from a bridge by the wind, he called to Mary for aid. Without danger, ever playing his harp, he was borne in the lap of the waves gently ashore. Even so in Herodotus' story the harper Arion of Methymna was saved by a dolphin when obliged to leap from his ship. We are reminded likewise of what is said to have been the practice of both St. Aldhelm and St. Francis of Assisi, when in gleemen's attire they stood on bridges and sang *carmina trivialia* to attract the attention of passers-by, to whom they afterwards appealed to better their lives.

The clergy changed their tactics when they found that open war waged against the minstrels was ineffective. They determined to meet them on their own ground. In a French collection of Miracles of the Virgin the author indicates clearly the course the wise pursued:

Li home de jolifté
Ki tant aiment lur volenté,
Amereint milz autre escrit
Ke cuntast amerus delit,
U bataille, u altre aventure,
En tels escriz mettent lur cure.
Tes escriz ne sunt a defendre,
Car grant sens i poet l'en aprendre,
De curteisie e de saveir.

However, he urges that they ought not to hold poems of this kind in so much esteem as to neglect more pious subjects, such as those of which he was himself to treat. That much ecclesiastical literature was produced in the hope of winning the laity from the allurements of worldly minstrelsy to the contemplation of pious things, to "bring our lusty folk to holynesse," is a fact of peculiar interest in the history of literature. It deserves consideration, moreover, in studying the influence of chivalric symbolism on mediæval Christian allegory.

In the early fourteenth century minstrels were to be found in every noble's household, as well as at the royal court. The more honourable kind were organised into unions. They had their kings and other officials, were paid according to their skill, wore badges of their profession, and were sensible of their dignity. They went about from one place to another, to serve municipalities at entertainments in guildhalls, or the clergy at religious celebrations in cathedrals or cloisters; they were assembled in large numbers at every proud marriage or lordly festival; they accompanied monarchs in travel, managed tournaments, arranged spectacles and plays, recorded events. They were indispensable to every one.

Apparently it was the opinion of all that an old romancer expressed:

Merry it is in hall to hear the harp,
The minstrels sing, the jugglers carp.

And it was only a question then (as now concerning the stage)

how to control the vicious tendencies that arose. Langland, aware of all, was content to point out one conspicuous danger of the minstrels' popularity:

> Clerks and knights welcome king's minstrels
> And for love of their lords list to them at feasts;
> Much more me thinketh rich men ought
> Have beggars before them, which be God's minstrels.

Chaucer let his parson point out that many a man gave to the minstrels for vainglory, "for to beren his renoun in the world." But in the House of Fame he saw

> alle maner of minstralës
> And gestiours that tellen talës
> Both of weping and of gamë;

and undoubtedly, as a typical man of his age, he found delight in such society.

But Chaucer and his more prominent fellow-writers of the fourteenth century—the author of *The Pearl*, Gower, and Langland —mark the beginning of a new era in poetic attitude. Lawrence Minot, in the time of Edward III., wrote as a minstrel of political events; Richard Rolle was minstrel-like in many of his religious pieces; Barbour glorified Robert Bruce in the minstrel style. It was evident, however, to the clear-sighted before 1400 that the dignity of minstrelsy was doomed. In the fifteenth century it steadily degenerated, and after the invention of printing was quite out of date. Finally, in the sixteenth century, were written these significant words:

> When Jesus went to Jairus' house
> (Whose daughter was about to die),
> He turned the minstrels out of doors,
> Among the rascal company:
> Beggars they are with one consent,
> And rogues by Act of Parliament.

Long, to be sure, minstrel-singing lingered in remote parts among the uneducated and obscure. Yet no more could it be

regarded seriously as art, and he who collected with so much zeal the remains on the Scottish Border, could only lament "old customs changed, old manners gone."

It is, however, more just and profitable for us to dwell on the period of the flourishing than of the decadence of the minstrel's work. How often we hear of kings who acclaim the bard for having harped away their grievous discomfort. How alluring the scene in the banquet-hall when the richly-robed singer, instrument in hand, delights the gay company before the blazing fire with his plaintive or stirring melodies. No less inspiriting is the thought of warriors marching to victory, like the Normans at Hastings, with a jongleur to lead them in triumphant song, of Crusaders and pilgrims helped by story-telling to bear the fatigues of travel, of the common folk lightened of their burdens by jovial tales that united them in fellowship. All sorts and conditions of men were made happier by the minstrels and their mirth.

The minstrel-poets of mediæval England unified the people by providing them with a common fund of enjoyment, a common sort of information, a common ideal of honour and truth, a common basis of religious belief. They did more. They communicated to them the best sentiment of other nations as manifested in their conceptions of heroes and saints. They contributed abundantly, like the Church, to make the whole world kin.

IV

In a famous picture by Giorgione the chief stimulating forces of all mediæval Europe seem symbolically portrayed. On either side of a pyramidal throne rising in triple stage to a high seat, where the Virgin sits with the Saviour in her arms, stand two men, St. Liberalis and St. Francis, in different attire, but with similar noble mien. The one, clad in resplendent armour and supporting the banner of the Cross, depicts the glory of chivalry; the other, in the sober costume of a monk, but with earnest eyes and pleading hands that speak out exhorta-

tion and self-sacrificing zeal, depicts the ecstasy of the faith. Between yet above them, gazing with tenderness and sweet joy on her babe, the Redeemer of the world, sits the Holy Mother in serenity. She is the mistress, the friend of both. Love for her, and trust in her Son, who together beseech mercy for all at the throne of God, form the inspiration of their high endeavour. Alike, we see, the active and the contemplative life were supported by eternal aspiration. Chivalry and faith, the foundation principles most characteristic of nobility in the Middle Ages, like liberty and truth to-day, were based on a common sentiment of dutiful love. Both manifest themselves permanently in admirable art.

The Old French romances are the glory of chivalry, as Gothic cathedrals of Catholic worship. Both witness to the lofty idealism of the mediæval world and embody materially its spiritual vision. Whether the knights in actual life were always as high-minded as the exemplars they chose, whether the monks were always worthy of their calling, it is not for us to inquire. The ordinary run of men have always lived on a low level. But that era is not desolate when ideals are kept prominent by common consent, when it is admitted by all to be the better part to follow where they lead.

In architecture, it is clear, the genius of the age found its most surpassing expression. There most beautifully and impressively the ideals of the time were exhibited. But the same faith, the same stirrings actuated the written monuments. The result is less satisfying only because less finished. The artists were too negligent, too impatient, too unrestrained. Their work is marred by oddities and crudities that more solicitude for perfect form might have removed. Mediæval literature lacks repose, dignity, comeliness. It is prone to exaggerations and incongruities, to repetitions and irrelevancies. And yet it is so fired by imagination, so sweetly, delightfully fresh, so elementally poetic, that it has proved a permanent awakening force.

Why, we ask, this rough incompleteness in poems when

cathedrals are so finished and fine? Perhaps the best men did not give themselves up to literature, since there were so many other ways of imaginative achievement. Intellectual giants devoted abundant energy to the construction of systems of theology, carefully reasoned and most subtle, to the successful administration of vast enterprises, to the harmonious control of masses of men. Possibly the external conditions of book-making also worked to the disadvantage of literary art. The slow methods of reproduction, the difficulties of rapid reading, the serial style of rendition, militated against proportion and unity. Scribes, we know, interpolated, combined, transformed at will. Redactors often "improved" until the original design was obscured. Theirs surely is the discredit of confusing many a clear narrative, of making turbid many a poet's thought. Had we mediæval works as they left their writers' hands, had we all they wrote, our estimate of their merit might be quite different. *Aucassin et Nicolete*, *Gawain and the Green Knight*, *The Pearl*, and other conspicuously artistic works are but accidentally preserved in unique manuscripts. Very few more would be required to overthrow entirely the impression of dulness and disorder that the numerous didactic documents and the utilitarian compilations and encyclopædias so piously multiplied have left on the superficial inquirer. The existence of *Béowulf* has modified critical strictures on Anglo-Saxon verse. The poetic *Edda* glorifies the early Norse. The *Mabinogion* redeems the literature of the Welsh. Yet only chance has saved these precious works. And satisfaction for their preservation but intensifies our sadness for the irrevocably gone. A just estimate of mediæval literature is now impossible. We generalise as best we can from insufficient evidence. We can only hope that our judgments are not far astray.

Before beginning the study of Middle English literature, the reader should set aside two wrong notions that he may perhaps have. First, that men were in the past fundamentally unlike what they are now. They were not. Their emotions, impulses,

occupations, and all else that went to make them men, were in general no more different from ours than in particular ours are from those of our fellows about us. The services of certain departed poets and critics in calling attention to the Middle Ages have been much diminished by the fantastic ideas of the epoch that they have established in people's minds. The time was not one of weird glamour and mystery, of ever-present romance and miracle. Dragons did not beset every traveller, nor enchanting damsels wait at every cross-roads to be ravished or relieved. A few who defied the Church suffered no torture-pangs. Occasionally men lived humdrum lives from birth to death. In truth, we have had more than enough of foolish fancy concerning the Middle Ages. Painstaking inquiry has at last substituted fact for fiction. We see with more and more distinctness that people formerly were no happier or unhappier, no brighter or duller, than we ourselves. Life now is a variegated fabric as it was then. Only the patterns differ, and the loom is a complicated machine. More poetic, indeed, than ours, the mediæval world may be called, because of its constant surprises, its bewildering contrasts, its spontaneity, its uncritical freedom. Literature reflects all this; it reflects, moreover, the credulity, the naïveté, the puerilities of the time. But it reveals men as they were, as real human beings, actuated like us by divergent motives, controlled by warring hopes and fears.

Furthermore, customs and tastes were not persistently the same. To most men, as Pater remarked, the age is "an all-embracing confusion." Study, however, shows one century developing naturally out of another. From the barbarity of the dark ages to the affectations of the pre-Renaissance epoch is a long but steady progression. Only gradually are rude warriors transformed into chivalrous knights, and ladies exalted in influence. Only slowly does increasing luxury refine manners, travel broaden thought, enlightenment accompany progress in science and art. Literature advances only little by little in the same course. Works of the eleventh and twelfth centuries are very dissimilar

from those of the fourteenth and fifteenth. The *Romance of the Rose* is a far cry from the *Song of Roland*, Chaucer's tales from Layamon's *Brut*. There is no uniformity in poetic product throughout the Middle Ages. No one is wise enough to characterise them by a phrase or a formula. Only the ignorant treat them as all alike. Mediæval literature, though mainly static in type, is variable in spirit. Within the scope of persistent modes of style, it reflects the changing thoughts of successive generations, who differed in vision according to the light of their day.

In the present work, the chronological method of presentation has been adopted within strict limits. For the sake of clearness, and to avoid needless repetition, one type of English literature after another, in suitable order, will be traced in its evolution. First will be treated Anglo-Latin, then Anglo-French, productions; afterwards, in detail, all extant English works within our period that for any reason merit an historian's notice. These last, it is evident, should not be considered by themselves, but, so far as space will permit, in connection with their sources and sequence, which often lend them their main interest.

CHAPTER II

ANGLO-LATIN LITERATURE

WHATEVER might be said of the "Britons" before the Conquest, certainly as concerns the attitude of those after it, the following words of Pope are quite beside the mark:

> But we brave Britons foreign laws despised,
> And lived unconquered and uncivilised.
> Fierce for the liberties of art, and bold,
> We still defied the Romans as of old.

It is true, as Pope says, that throughout the mediæval period "critic learning flourished most in France"; but it is also true that then some of the greatest "critics" of France were born or lived in England, and that criticism in Latin and French was almost too strictly heeded in the development of English art. Deference to "foreign laws" was advantageous perhaps to English civilisation; but it tethered the styles of native writers so narrowly as to deprive their originality of free play for several hundred years.

The reckoning of Rome was keen. Alexander II. justified the Conqueror's claim to Edward's throne and won thereby rich reward. As a result of the Normans' success in battle, the political power of the Holy Church militant was vastly increased in England, and her sway over both public and private opinion more firmly established than before. This was

a condition of great moment in its effect upon the development of English literature.

Before the Conquest the attitude of English ecclesiastics towards the vernacular was most friendly: it was regarded as an important occupation of learned men to popularise clerical knowledge in familiar speech. But solicitude for the education of the Saxon element of the population was not a glory of Norman ecclesiastical rule. Those of the clergy who might have continued to minister to the people by writing in their own tongue were discouraged from doing so by the indifference of superiors in office, and devoted themselves to more scholarly production. Here and there, to be sure, the Chronicle was maintained by conservative patriots; but the foreign primates, wishing to eradicate the enthusiasm for old England which they saw was cherished in the abbeys, placed outsiders in control of them, and rewarded those only who furthered the ambitions of the World Church. Rome had constituted herself definitely into a nation apart, a nation without barriers of language or race, numbering her subjects everywhere, and making confident claim to their supreme regard. Her hope was to bring about uniformity of sentiment and service throughout Christendom. Thanks largely to her power, the mediæval period is the most cosmopolitan of English history.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning." And, without question, if a student would get more than an oblique view of the culture of mediæval England, and understand adequately the circumstances then potent in literary incentive, he must not neglect to acquaint himself with the writings then most prized—those, namely, in Latin. Such prominent writers of the nineteenth century as Carlyle, Arnold, Ruskin, Pater, Newman, as well as Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Mill, and others of their class, had they lived in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries (and men of equal powers lived then), would undoubtedly have written in Latin. Furthermore, they would probably have spoken Latin with natural ease. Their serious

studies would all have been of Latin books, and the Latin classics would have been more familiar to them than writings of their own time and land.

Anglo-Latin writings differ markedly from those in the vernaculars of the same epoch in point of form, subject, and authorship. While Anglo-French and Middle-English works are for the most part in verse, the bulk of Anglo-Latin literature is in prose. While the most interesting documents in both vernaculars are romances, which found but slight original treatment in Latin, no truly significant work of theology, philosophy, history, law, literary criticism, or natural science was first composed in either vulgar tongue. While the name of no great English poet from the mediæval period before Chaucer can be mentioned, the number of Anglo-Latin writers whose names are still worthily conspicuous is so large as to give reason for national pride.

The literature of every people is a growth, more or less steady; but its chief formative influences at any particular period are more likely to be exerted by contemporaneous production in countries of kindred spirit than by what was earlier written in the same land. Certainly, to form an estimate of mediæval works, concurrent world-movements deserve more careful consideration than divergent national inheritance. We must seek, then, to discover the collateral forces, as well as the continuous tendencies, which struggled with one another in the Middle Ages, and finally yielded, as a compromise, our modern English style.

To that end, the period we are studying may be divided into four successive ages, corresponding roughly to the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, and may be denominated according to the most striking aspects of intellectuality then apparent: the age of monasticism, the age of feudalism, the age of scholasticism, the age of nationalism—the ages, if one will take representative Latin writers, of Lanfranc and Anselm; of Geoffrey of Monmouth, John of Salisbury, Giraldus Cambrensis,

and Walter Map; of Robert Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, and Duns Scotus; of William of Ockham, Richard of Bury, and John Wycliffe. The twelfth century is the flourishing period of original Anglo-Latin and Anglo-French composition, the fourteenth that of original composition in the native tongue. In the former no one of station was disposed to write English; before the end of the latter both Latin and French in England had fallen into comparative disuse.

I

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, that great monument of our nation's history, which fortunately was continued by monks of Peterborough for nearly a hundred years after the Conquest, reveals the sentiments of the native population towards William I. in the following significant words:

The King William about whom we speak was a very wise man, and very powerful, more dignified and strong than any of his predecessors were. He was mild to the good men who loved God; and over all measure severe to the men who gainsaid his will. On that same stead on which God granted him that he might subdue England, he reared a noble monastery, and there placed monks, and well endowed it. In his days was the noble monastery at Canterbury built, and also very many others over all England. This land was also plentifully supplied with monks, and they lived their lives after the rule of St. Benedict. And in his days Christianity was such that every man who would followed what belonged to his condition.

But there was another aspect of William's administration of which the chronicler felt bound also to speak.

Certainly, he adds, there was much hardship in this time, and very great distress. He caused castles to be built and oppressed the poor. . . . The rich complained, and the poor murmured; but he was so sturdy that he recked nought of them. They must follow wholly the king's will, if they would live, or have land, or property, or even his peace.

Under such conditions as are indicated in this last passage, there could have been but feeble incentive to writing in the English vernacular; and, naturally enough, the period directly

succeeding the Conquest is marked by lassitude in literary effort on the part of the people. So far as the native English were concerned, the eleventh century was an age of retrospect.

The author of the Latin Life of Hereward states regarding a certain monk Leofric, who chronicled the deeds of Hereward's youth, that it was his custom to gather and write down in English "omnes actus gigantum et bellatorum ex fabulis antiquorum aut ex fideli relatione, ad edificationem audientium." Leofric's works, however, are completely lost, together with nearly everything else that would enable us to judge by direct evidence of the quality of the secular poetry of the time. We know, nevertheless, that there must have been in circulation a large body of popular lyrics as well as tales of giants and warriors. In a history of Ely, for example, it is related how King Cnut, when proceeding one day by boat to keep the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin at the little church by the Ouse, heard from a distance the song of the monks, and bade his boatmen row slowly that all might attentively listen; how, further, in memory of the event, he himself composed a poem beginning:

> Merry sang the monks in Ely
> When Cnut the King rowed by.
> Row, knights, near the land,
> And hear we the monks' song.

Which poem, the chronicler asserts, was still, when he wrote in the twelfth century, "sung and remembered in proverbs." Likewise, as we learn from William of Malmesbury, the splendid ceremonies attendant on the marriage of Cnut's daughter Gunhild to King Henry of Germany, in 1036, were commemorated long afterwards by plain people singing "in the highways." The Latin Lives of Edward the Confessor, King Harold, and Hereward betray the existence of similar ballads on happenings of general interest. Such productions were no doubt in the main short and artless. But there appear to have been others which were longe and more ambitious in scope. From the eleventh century probably date the Anglo-Saxon originals of the Anglo-Norman poems

on Walthéof, Aelof, Horn, Havelok, Guy of Warwick, Beves of Hampton, perhaps Tristram, and other heroes of manly character. These tales of native warriors were perpetuated by the Normans for the same reason that they preserved the *chansons de geste* of Charlemagne and his peers, because they were stimulating to courage and piety, as well as conducive to mirth. "Above all men," says Thomas Stephens, "the Norman was an imitator and therefore an improver; and it was precisely because he was the least rigid, most supple, plastic, and accommodating of mortals, that he became the civiliser and ruler wherever he was thrown. . . . Wherever his neighbours invented or possessed anything worthy of admiration, the sharp, inquisitive Norman poked his aquiline nose. . . . The Norman was a practical plagiarist. Wherever what we now call the march of intellect advanced, there was the sharp, eager face of the Norman in the van."

In the Norman era the two great moving impulses were war and religion, and consequently the characteristic literature of the period was heroic and pious. The narratives that were then chiefly favoured by the laity were epic in temper; the religious works that most appealed to them were lives of saints. Single-eyed zeal pervades the whole literary product of the time. It was the age of monasticism.

By virtue of the monks' labour, it was also an age of record. Early were written by native scribes precious manuscripts of English works, such as the codex of *Béowulf*; while, with similar disheartening outlook for new composition, Irishmen were putting into shape the most valuable of extant documents in their own ancient tongue, the famous *Leabhar na h-Uidre* (Book of the Dun Cow), the *Book of Leinster*, and the *Book of Hymns*. The English were looking backward when they sadly continued the chronicle of their independent past, while contemporary Normans and Icelanders, in preparing the *Doomsday Book* (1086) and the *Landnámabók* (Book of Settlements, *c.* 1110), were inspired by a glowing vision of the future. The new guides of culture in England were luminaries of learning from the South.

With Lanfranc, who was anointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1070, begins the line of great Churchmen who after the Conquest wielded immense power in that see. An Italian of noble birth, early trained in the study of law, led by ambition into the Church, a man of acumen, eloquence, and learning, he was in his time one of the most learned scholars, and one of the most capable prelates, in Europe. Lanfranc established a new standard of scholarship in England. He was "the father and protector of monks," according to the *Chronicle*, but he tolerated among them no such complacent ignorance as had previously existed. He stiffened their discipline, made them ashamed of their parochialism, stimulated their desire for wide knowledge of affairs, and incited them to fondness for fine architecture and beautiful books. He assumed his office with the sincere desire to benefit England, and though he was always viewed by his countrymen as a foreigner, he himself wrote "we English" and "our island" to men abroad. He was as patriotic as the Conqueror, equally energetic and keen, similarly strong as an administrator and master of men.

Lanfranc died in 1089, and, four years after, William Rufus, yielding at last to much urging, chose the noble Anselm to fill his place. Also a well-born Italian, Anselm had been Lanfranc's pupil at Bec and had succeeded him there as prior in 1063. He had been Abbot of Bec some fifteen years when he unwillingly accepted the English archbishopric and entered upon a period of anxious, but yet, as he deemed, necessary dispute. Both as a man and as a thinker Anselm was Lanfranc's superior. In character more spiritual and humble, he was in intellect more penetrating and profound. "Penitus sanctus, anxie doctus," William of Malmesbury called him; in Dante's Vision he occupied a place in paradise "among the spirits of light and power in the sphere of the sun." Strangely belated was the honour paid to his memory when he was canonised in 1494.

Lanfranc's writings, like those of many an early thinker, appear incommensurate with his reputation. ' We have a book

of his letters, certain commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul, and a body of *decreta* for the use of the English Benedictine monks; we know also that he took pains to correct the English manuscripts of the Church Fathers and the Scriptures, which had been sadly disfigured. But the work of his that gave him most renown was his *Liber Scintillarum*, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini Nostri*, written about 1079 in England to oppose the heterodox views of his former friend Berengar on the doctrine of transubstantiation. In comparison with these, the writings of Anselm assume a magnified distinction. Of his three most important treatises only one, the *Cur Deus Homo*, was undertaken (in 1089) in England, and it was finished in Italy. The *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, on which his fame chiefly depends, were composed in the quiet of Bec. The *Cur Deus Homo* is in the form of a dialogue between the author and the Abbot of Bec, and was planned to prove the necessity of the Redemption. The *Monologion* and *Proslogion* are elaborate treatises on God, His existence, nature, and attributes. In the former the author follows an inductive chain of argument, in the latter he develops a single deduction. Anselm's fundamental assumption is expressed in the words "neque enim quaero intelligere, ut credam; sed credo ut intelligam." Starting from a basis of faith, he strove (like Descartes six hundred years later) to prove that pure reason substantiated the convictions thence derived. His method of argumentation is Platonic, in contrast to the Aristotelian which was coming to be more frequently employed. In applying it, Anselm shows himself a clear-headed, cogent thinker, bold in speculation and honest in purpose. His many other works confirm the general impression of him as a man of genius. His controversial treatises on the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, Original Sin, the Contempt of Temporal Things, and the like, evince unusual skill in dialectics. His meditations, prayers, homilies, and very numerous letters reveal the human tenderness and spiritual fervour of an uplifted nature. It was of great consequence to the clergy of England to have at their head for

sixteen years a man of irreproachable character, and one of the most distinguished metaphysicians of Europe. The styles of religious and didactic literature which he and Lanfranc adopted, were cultivated with varying emphasis and success by all ecclesiastics who during the next three centuries became eminent for learning and piety.

Among other writers of the same period were Osbern, a native of Canterbury, and superior of the monastery there, who translated several lives of English saints from Anglo-Saxon into Latin; and the Norman Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury (Chancellor from 1072 to 1078, employed on the Doomsday Survey, noted as a collector and binder of books), who also engaged in the same pious task of writing saints' lives. Hagiography was, in fact, a common occupation of the monks, prosecuted by many with indiscriminate zeal. Yet, since then in England ecclesiastical and political history amounted to much the same thing, such records often illumine the actualities of contemporary conditions. It is so, for example, with the works of Eadmer, a monk of Canterbury († *c.* 1124), to whom we are indebted for a life of Anselm, his intimate friend, as well as for lives of the earlier English saints, Dunstan, Bregwin, and Oswald. Likewise in his *Historia Novorum*, a history of England from the Conquest to 1122, Eadmer occupied himself for the most part with the doings of the archbishops of his see. He was a man of good sense, and deserves commendation for his effort to avoid the absurd in legend and miracle, as well as for his lucidity of thought and his transparent style.

II

Chronicles, however, were throughout the Middle Ages the most valuable product of the monasteries, and as such it will not be amiss to consider them here together, especially since they are closely connected with one another by the identity of a large part of their contents and the rigid conventionality of their

method. They hardly deserve to be dignified by the name of "histories," for their authors give but little evidence of large perspective, careful discrimination between fact and fiction, or philosophic generalisation. They lack the high distinction of Bede's Ecclesiastical History, which for over three centuries had remained without a peer. But they are our chief sources of information regarding the period, and some of them perpetuate folklore and fables of great significance to the student of poetry. The interest of students in these documents is sometimes strikingly diverse. The historian of events estimates highly compilations of facts that the historian of literature deliberately ignores; while, on the contrary, the former sometimes vehemently denounces imaginative narratives which the latter eagerly applauds.

Among cloister chroniclers of the beginning of the twelfth century may be mentioned Florence of Worcester and Simeon of Durham, of both of whom but little is known. Florence († 1118) based his *Chronicon ex Chronicis* on the work of the Irish monk Marianus Scotus, which ends with 1082, gathering other material from Bede, Asser, and some lost version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. His work was afterwards twice continued, to 1141 and to 1295. Simeon's book (written between 1104 and 1108) is mainly an account of the church of Durham, valuable not for its style, but for information elsewhere inaccessible.

The son of a married priest, and a native of Shropshire, Ordericus Vitalis (1075–*c.* 1142) wrote at St. Evroult in Normandy an extensive Ecclesiastical History from the year 1 A.D. to 1141, which, with all its lack of system and method, is particularly important for its account of English and Norman events from the Conquest on. Ordericus maintains that "the litigious quarrels of bishops and the bloody conflicts of princes furnish more abundant materials for the writers of history than the propositions of theologians or the privations or prodigies of ascetics" —a truly significant change of view! Another son of a married priest, Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon († *c.* 1155), produced

an *Historia Anglorum* (beginning 55 B.C.), which was five times revised between 1130 and 1154, and, though neither very accurate nor original, long remained a standard work. Henry was brought up in the house of Robert, Bishop of Lincoln, where he associated with princes and young noblemen in the charge of his patron, and there developed a talent for writing secular verse, in which he attained considerable distinction. His natural tastes did not lead him to persevere in the drudgery necessary to a trustworthy historian, and he in no wise surpasses the other eclectic chroniclers of his time. Likewise a priest's son, and educated in the company of courtiers, was St. Ailred, the holy Cistercian abbot of Rievaulx (1109-1166), an intimate friend of both King David of Scotland and his son. His chief historical works were a Genealogy of the Kings of England, an account of the Battle of the Standard (1138), and Lives of St. Cuthbert and St. Edward the Confessor. He also wrote many homilies, epistles, and religious treatises, among them a dialogue *De Spirituali Amicitia*, suggested by Cicero.

More distinguished as an historian than any of these writers by reason of his careful accumulation and presentation of facts, his pictorial power, and his elegant style, William of Malmesbury († *c.* 1142) stands conspicuous. His chief work is a *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* (A.D. 449-1127), but he also wrote *Historiae Novellae* (1125-1142), several lives of English bishops and saints, and a history of Glastonbury. Green ranks William as "the leader of a new historic school who treat English events as part of the history of the world, and emulate classic models by a more philosophic arrangement of their materials." William was doubtless the better able to understand conflicting race-tendencies and to judge without prejudice because, like Henry of Huntingdon, he was of mixed English and Norman blood, that excellent strain which proved so helpful in the upbuilding of the new nation. His History is not alone valuable for the facts it contains, but perhaps more for its literary form. William was not sternly scientific. He enlivened his narrative with amusing tales,

not always relevant, and he was ever ready to make use of popular songs. With the "idle tales of the Britons" regarding Arthur he was familiar, but he thought Arthur "deserved to be celebrated not in the dreams of fallacious fable, but in true history." William tells us that he should be ashamed to compile annals after the manner of the *Chronicle*. No arid statements for him, no dull pages of mere unembellished record! He and men of his type aimed at something more profound and illuminating than anything that had before been attempted in England. Taking the old Roman historians as models, they strove for dignity and elegance, yet not always prudently. The preposterous speech-making of warriors in crises of action, the high-flown rhetoric, the bombast of some ancient histories, they unwisely revived. And to these they added other faults. True, some were able to discriminate and organise better than others, but even the best were too respectful of authority, too timid in rejecting unsubstantiated tradition, too fond of popular etymology and classical quotations, too ready to accept miraculous interpretations of physical phenomena, too unscientific in considering cause and effect. They were men of their time.

So interrelated are the works of mediæval chronographers and historiographers that it is often difficult to determine the original contribution of each. But for one large section of their works all who wrote after 1136 had a unique ultimate source. For the history of the early Britons, every English chronicler who treated that theme relied more or less confidently on the disclosures of one of the most brilliant of literary impostors, Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose *Historia Regum Britanniae* was by far the most permanently influential literary product of the time. Geoffrey was a Welshman by blood, a nephew of Uchtryd, Archdeacon of Llandaff. Probably he was born at Monmouth and reared in the Benedictine priory founded there by William I. At all events, early in life he was brought into connection with Norman nobles, and was educated mainly in Latin and French as one of them. In 1140 he inherited his uncle's position of Archdeacon,

but was not made a priest until a few days prior to his appointment as Bishop of St. Asaph's, and he did not visit his see before his death, in 1154. His History appeared about 1136, with a dedication to Robert, Earl of Gloucester, a natural son of Henry I., and the Mæcenas of the time. Previously he had written a separate tract on the Prophecies of Merlin.

Gifted with keen intelligence and wit, Geoffrey was alert to divine the public desire, and executed with surprising success a daring scheme, which it required a master mind even to plan. Aware of the curiosity of the Normans regarding the past of the country with which they had identified themselves, he conceived the idea of writing a complete history of early Britain, which should exalt into splendour the achievements of his own ambitious but afflicted race. Taking material from native traditions, current European fables, and classical narratives, he wove together an amazing tissue of subtle fabrication, and exhibited this his own creation as a genuine antique. The better to arouse credence, he gave out that he had discovered an ancient book in the British tongue which contained all the information he advanced, and pretended to no credit but that of an exact translator. For the truth of his assertions he called to witness the venerable Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford (his part in the deception we find it hard to comprehend), and proceeded with all dignity, with elaborate show of precision, to unfold a sober record of would-be facts. There was no link lacking in Geoffrey's chain of history from the time when the Trojan Brutus set foot on the shores of Albion and drove out the giant aborigines of the land to the era of the Saxon invasions. Most knowingly he traced the career of the illustrious Arthur, and with such convincing power, that he may truly be said to have contributed more than any other individual to making eternal that monarch's renown. A few contemporary scholars uttered their indignation at his flagrant overriding of the truth, but their protests passed unheeded. Geoffrey pictured the history of the land as the people wished it to be, and they cherished belief that so subtly ministered to their self-respect.

The new History won immediate fame. It became a subject of common talk. It was translated over and over again. Its statements were reproduced in all sorts of learned documents. It exerted for many centuries a power both on literature and on life. Without this work not only Arthur but also Merlin would have been far less potent a name to conjure with, and the stories of Lear, Cymbeline, Ferrex and Porrex, Gorboduc, Sabrina, and Locrine would probably never have become familiar to English ears. The best poetic history of Britain in the vernacular, Layamon's *Brut*, is but a redaction of it. If, as he first planned, Milton had written his great epic on a national theme, he would have followed Geoffrey's lead.

The way in which Geoffrey's epoch-making work was received by the enlightened of his time is exhibited by the witty tale of a contemporary and fellow-countryman, Gerald de Barri, better known as Giraldus Cambrensis.

A certain Melerius, writes Gerald, having always an extraordinary familiarity with unclean spirits, by seeing them, knowing them, talking with them, and calling each by his proper name, was enabled through their assistance to foretell future events. . . . He knew when any one spoke falsely in his presence, for he saw the devil as it were leaping and exulting on the tongue of the liar. If the evil spirits oppressed him too much, the Gospel of St. John was laid on his bosom, when like birds they immediately vanished away. But when that book was removed, and the History of the Britons by Geoffrey Arthur, for the sake of experiment, substituted in its stead, they settled in far greater numbers and for a much longer time than usual, not only upon his entire body but on the book that was placed upon it.

Amusing, indeed, and justified! Yet Gerald's complacent remarks about his own works would have been more prophetic if applied to these fables he scorned: "They will be read by posterity although they offend men of the present generation; and though carped at now, will be profitable in future times."

Gerald is perhaps the most picturesque figure of his century—mercurial, fiery, and vain, yet earnest, original, and energetic; a handsome, well-informed, witty, and fearless man, who took delight in struggle and brought much good to pass.

His mother was kin to the princes of South Wales, his father a Norman baron. Born about 1147, at the Castle of Manorbier, Pembrokeshire (which was in his opinion "the pleasantest spot in Wales"), given his first education by the Bishop of St. David's, at the age of twenty he went to Paris to pursue his studies, and afterwards lectured there on rhetoric and literature. In 1172 he returned to England full of the zeal of a reformer, and set to work with an unconquerable will to improve conditions in Wales. His chief hope was to become Bishop of St. David's, which he wished to restore to the dignity of a metropolitan see; but, though twice chosen to that office by the canons, his election was refused by the reigning kings, who feared to put so vigorous a partisan of Welsh independence in so powerful a position. In 1184, however, Henry II. made him one of his chaplains, and in 1185 he was bidden attend the young Prince John on his fruitless expedition to Ireland. He and the great justiciar, Ranulph de Glanville, accompanied Bishop Baldwin when he preached the third Crusade in Wales. Together they two also attended King Henry in France, and were probably present at his decease. When Richard left England, Gerald was made coadjutor with William de Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, to administer the kingdom. Yet, though thus always close to the throne, Gerald never attained any much coveted distinction, and he had reason in later years to speak with resentment of the way his superiors had rewarded his service. He died, about 1223, after a period of great quiet in contrast with his earlier years of dispute and litigation. "Many and great wars," said the Prince of Powys, "have we Welshmen waged with England, but none so great and fierce as he who fought the King and the Archbishop, and withstood the might of the whole clergy and people of England, for the honour of Wales."

Gerald's works are of various kinds, but all of genuine interest. His *Topography of Ireland* and *History of the Conquest of Ireland* were the result of his own wide-eyed travel there, the latter especially evincing an unusual intelligence and power

of quick observation. Though not without faults of superciliousness and over-credulity, these works are in the main impartial and frank. From both much useful information concerning the social customs and beliefs of the ancient Irish can still be obtained. The *Topography* was published in 1187 in unique fashion: Gerald read it in public at Oxford, in parts, on three successive days, securing an audience each day by giving them a sumptuous feast; on the first day he entertained the poor of the town, on the second the teachers and most advanced students, on the third the other students, the citizens, and the soldiers of the place. He himself speaks eloquently of this magnificent event, which he declares was worthy of the classic ages of antiquity, nothing comparable having ever been witnessed in England. Gerald's ostentation was naive. In one place he tells of the way he attracted large audiences of doctors and scholars at Paris, because they were "charmed by the sweetness of his voice, the beauty of his language, and the force of his arguments." He thought it worth while to prepare an autobiography, and collected into one book his letters, poems, speeches, and prefaces. He also wrote a valuable *Description of Wales*, and a *Gemma Ecclesiastica*, or book of instruction for the Welsh clergy, both of them vigorous and entertaining. The latter, the author's favourite work, he presented to Pope Innocent III. It is extant in a unique manuscript.

A special mark of enlightenment in Gerald was his consciousness of the fact that he might have done well to write in French rather than in Latin (it never occurred to him, of course, to write in English); and his style shows exceptional freedom from pedantry. He was a wholly different person from the ordinary dullard who merely recorded facts.

Though chronicles, as has been said, remain throughout the mediæval period the most valuable literary work of the monasteries, a large part of the best historical writing in the twelfth century is not due to monks. Then, indeed, a truly remarkable set of men, interested in tracing the progress

of events, were themselves conspicuous in public life. Notable are the Welsh trio, Geoffrey, Gerald, and keenest of all, a writer of whom we shall presently treat, Walter Map—all archdeacons, brilliant secular clerks, well-read, much-travelled, open-minded, not scornful or afraid of the ways of the world. It was of no small advantage to them to be companions of princes and associates of statesmen, themselves engaged in making the history of their age. Boldness and freedom characterise their expression of opinion, which, moreover, was less musty than that of cloister growth.

In the last quarter of the century flourished several historians deserving mention, such as "Benedict of Peterborough," William of Newburgh († *c.* 1198), Roger of Hoveden († 1201), and Ralph of Diceto († *c.* 1202). The chronicle ascribed to Benedict († 1193) deals primarily with events from 1170 to 1192, and is the most authentic record of Henry II.'s reign. The fact that the author had access to public records and State papers, and often reproduced them, gives his book peculiar value. William, Canon of the Austin priory at Newburgh, Yorkshire, is specially exalted by modern historians because of his sensible discrimination and sober judgment, as well as for the elegance and vigour of his style. Freeman's overdrawn remark that he is "the father of historical criticism" was due in part at least to William's attitude towards Geoffrey's fabrications.

> A certain writer, says William, has come up in our times to wipe out the blots on the Britons, weaving together ridiculous figments about them, and raising them with impudent vanity high above the virtue of the Macedonians and the Romans. This man is named Geoffrey, and has the by-name of Arthur, because, laying on the colour of Latin speech, he disguised with the honest name of history the fables about Arthur taken from the old tales of the Britons with increase of his own.

A remarkably true statement of the case, we must admit, and William's indignation against Geoffrey was more righteous, because more necessary, than that of historians to-day. Roger of Hoveden (Howden, Yorkshire) was another layman who profited by his

secular life. He enjoyed personal association with Henry II. and Richard I., and was a Justice Itinerant of the Forests in 1189. What he wrote of events from 1192 to 1201 has alone independent value. Roger began at 732. But still more bold was Ralph of Diceto, Dean of St. Paul's, London, who was willing to start at the Creation, from which indefinite epoch his *Imagines*, or "Outlines" of History, followed the supposed course of events down to his own time, the record before 1188 being naturally mere compilation and now valueless.

In contrast with these all-embracing works, three of lesser size, but of more curious interest, deserve mention: the *De Rebus Gestis Ricardi Primi* (1189-92), by Richard of Devizes, a monk of St. Swithin's, Winchester, which is an entertaining account of Richard's brilliant career abroad and of what happened at home during his absence; the *Chronica* (1173-1203) of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmund's, by Jocelyn of Brakeland, which throws much light on the interests and occupations of mediæval monks, and, it will be remembered, inspired Carlyle's *Past and Present*; and the *Otia Imperialia* of Gervase of Tilbury (Essex), in the main a miscellany of current fables and superstitions, which was compiled, *c.* 1211, for the entertainment of the German Emperor Otho IV. (a descendant of Henry II.'s mother Matilda), through whose favour Gervase was made marshal of the kingdom of Arles.

These writers bring us to the threshold of the thirteenth century, when monastic annalists are again supreme, and gradually deteriorate in style and importance. For clearness, we follow their course rapidly to the end. Henceforth the abbeys afford the best chronicles of the realm, and above all the old Benedictine houses. Among the reformed orders of monks only the Cistercian Ralph of Coggeshall († *c.* 1227) is prominent; and only a few friars, such as the Oxford teachers Trivet († 1328) and Eccleston (*fl.* 1260), ever gained eminence in this direction, the former for his *Annales Sex Regum Angliae* (1135-1307), the latter for his history of the Franciscans in

England from 1224 to 1250. Of monastic writers, some confined themselves to the history of their particular foundations, others introduced into their works matters of larger concern, while a third class, more ambitious, strove to compass all the movements of the time.

It was at St. Albans that the most valuable chronicles of the last sort appeared. A genuine school of history flourished there, meriting special attention because its product offers the most reliable and complete survey of events from about 1200 to 1450. Lanfranc had first definitely established the scriptorium at St. Albans, providing the monks with abundant manuscripts to copy. The preëminent distinction in historiography that this abbey finally won amongst others—which even surpassed that of St. Denis in France—was due to its nearness to London, and to its position on one of the great highroads of travel, as well as to the custom that had established itself of making its library a special repository of all valuable State documents, where they might be permanently preserved and consulted in cases of disputed authority.

Utilising as a nucleus the book of the abbot John de Cella, Roger of Wendover († 1236) produced a *Flores Historiarum*, which follows the course of events from the Creation to 1235, and, though not aiming at originality, in its later parts has much merit. This work was revised and continued to 1259 by Roger's successor, the greatest of the St. Albans, perhaps of all early English, historiographers — Matthew Paris, who is still highly esteemed for his picturesque style, large perspective, and sane judgment. His *Chronica Majora* was more than a local, or even a national record. He dealt with large politics, and was cosmopolitan in his survey. He buttressed his opinions by the evidence of definite enactment, and introduced into his book many papal bulls, royal letters, and other documents of great historical value. He was himself on intimate terms with Henry III. and an eye-witness of various important events of which he tells. Yet his attitude is usually impartial, and he has

the courage to express whatever convictions his observation and intelligence declared right. Various recensions of his *Chronica* soon appeared, and it was continued by the successive historiographers at his abbey—by Rishanger, for example, to 1306, by Trokelowe to 1323, by Blaneford to 1324, finally by Thomas of Walsingham (Norfolk) from 1377 to 1422. Walsingham treats at length of Wycliffe and the Lollards, with whom he had no sympathy, and he evinces great chagrin at the attitude of Oxford, his *alma mater*, towards these heretics. From him, however, we get important light on the revolt in thought and act in Chaucer's time.

Other chronicles were written in the fourteenth century by such canons as Walter of Hemingburgh, of Gisburn in Yorkshire († after 1300); Adam Murimuth of St. Paul's, London († 1347); and Henry Knighton, of St. Mary's, Leicester († *c.* 1366). Knighton's work was continued from 1377 to 1395 by a partisan of the Duke of Lancaster, but a bitter opponent of Wycliffe, and in this form is one of the most valuable histories of the period. For our present purpose the Latin chronicles of the fifteenth century are insignificant.

We take leave of the historians with a word about the *Polychronicon* of Ranulph Higden, a monk of St. Werburgh's, Chester († *c.* 1364). This "chronicle of many ages" deals with much more than annals. It is a sum of generally accepted knowledge on universal geography, history, and science—a whole *Encyclopædia Britannica* in orderly arrangement. Although it contained nothing really original, it was an extremely useful compendium of what then passed for fact, and one is not astonished at its surpassing popularity. It circulated in hundreds of copies, and, after the printing press was established, in various editions. Special interest attaches to it as the first historical work since the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which was accessible in English prose. It was translated by John of Trevisa in 1387, and once again, in the fifteenth century. Caxton printed John of Trevisa's translation in 1482, and this long remained a standard work.

One cannot consider this extensive historical production, much of it mechanical and dull, and all in commonplace Latin, without contrasting it with the wonderful sagas of contemporary Northerners, happily composed by them in the vernacular of their land. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries form the golden age of Old Norse prose, and Iceland was then as preëminent for history as England for the drama in the reign of Elizabeth. In no other tongue of mediæval Europe do we find historical works at all comparable with those in Norse for naturalness, picturesqueness, fidelity to fact, vigour, or variety. Here is no affectation, no bookishness, no archaism of method or style; but all is vivid, graphic, real. Over and over again one can read these "prose epics" of warrior kings and proud freemen, of heroic men and women, whose individuality is made plain, and ever one's wonder grows at the literary power their authors display. It is sad to think that something similar might have been accomplished by Englishmen of the same period had the learned not felt obliged to write in a foreign tongue. Ordinary Middle English prose lacks the muscularity of the Norse as well as the brilliance of the Welsh and the lucidity of the French of the period. It exhibits few of the sturdy qualities that made Anglo-Saxon prose so admirable. And all because Latin had been adopted as the dignified medium to express the thought of cultivated men. The almost complete abandonment of the use of English by native historians for three hundred years and more seems to us now hardly less than a literary disaster.

III

The twelfth century was an age of universal awakening, of large rivalries, of stimulating activity—an age of enlightening travel, of prosperous social conditions, of noble architecture—an independent, idealistic, aristocratic age—the age of "fredom, trouthe, and curteisye"—the age of feudalism.

Of vernacular writings in this age the most characteristic are

romances and art-lyrics—works that an ungentle person would be slow to conceive and an untrained writer at a loss to produce. With their composition the commonalty as such had nothing to do. Epic incentive was no longer present: refined artistry had come into vogue. Now subtleties of expression were favoured; conventions of sentiment were expected; a hierarchy of poets was acknowledged. Kings and queens were numbered among the devotees of polite verse; knights and ladies achieved distinction by their pens; bishops and other clergy were enamoured of letters. Literary activity was centralised at courts, castles, and religious houses. It was encouraged by patronage, promoted by demand. All authors, whether ecclesiastical or secular, wrote feudally—with devotion, with recognised allegiance, in service to some person or cause. Even as troubadours sang for the reward, and trouvères wrote at the request, of individual patrons or patronesses, so clerks worked as disciples, under direction. Yet most appear astonishingly free from subserviency. The majority seem to have submitted themselves to none but voluntary yokes. There was much licence and scepticism in the air. More than in the century before, or that succeeding, the learned were men of the world and acquainted with other than holy writ. The twelfth century was an age of humanism.

To understand the humanistic revival of the times, one must know somewhat of the educational institutions then prominent in Western Europe. In the eleventh century regular instruction was available almost solely at the monasteries. In England before the Conquest the schools of Canterbury, Glastonbury, Abingdon, Winchester, Worcester, and York had at one time or another gained celebrity under distinguished guidance, and, though the era of their European renown was long past before the coming of the Normans, they and other abbeys maintained, throughout the whole mediæval period, seminaries of some dignity. There were also secular schools in connection with cathedrals or lay organisations, but these seem never to have attained to particular eminence. It was different, however, on

the Continent, whither, since the time of Lanfranc and Anselm, English students in large numbers had betaken themselves for advanced education. In Norman times the monastery schools of Normandy, particularly that of Bec, were recognised as important centres of learning. Alongside of these were many of fame in France proper, such as that on Mont St. Geneviève at Paris, which flourished supreme under the great Abelard (1079-1142). But gradually cathedral schools surpassed them in distinction, and by about 1150 had become the chief resorts for high intellectual stimulus. Their organisation prepared the way for the universities, which established themselves definitely about the close of the century.

The fame of these schools depended almost wholly on individual teachers. Young men went here and there to study under this or that renowned scholar. In various places they pursued different branches of research. Paris came to be noted for its schools of theology and the arts; Bologna, Orleans, and Montpellier for canon or civil law; Montpellier for medicine; but Paris offered no instruction in civil law, and Bologna had no faculty of theology before 1352. Originally the term *universitas* might have been applied to any co-operative society. Gradually it was limited to associations of teachers or students. While at Bologna it was the latter, at Paris it was the former who banded themselves together under this name, to uphold special rights and dignities. The seat of learning, as opposed to the organisation, was at first called a *studium*, and not until well on in the Middle Ages did "university" convey the idea of establishment. Special university buildings were at first unknown. Those of the "nations" at Paris were but residences, where students from various countries assembled for convenience, or as the recipients of bounty. The English "colleges," modelled after them, did not rise before the second half of the thirteenth century (Merton 1264, Balliol 1282), and only became numerous in the fifteenth. The migratory policy controlled even the organisation. If for some reason a "university" came into conflict with local authority, it moved

away to a new abode. The first *studium generale* at Oxford appears to have owed its existence to a large migration of English students from Paris about 1167, when Henry II., then in dispute with Becket and suspecting that the clerks abroad were partisans of his foe, ordered all of them who possessed estates in his land to return home, "as they loved their revenues." And Cambridge was established through a migration from Oxford in 1209.

The studies in the mediæval schools proceeded along the old traditional lines of the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music). Together these formed the seven liberal arts. Based on them was the work of the professional schools of divinity, law, and medicine. In higher schools of philosophy were prosecuted advanced studies in logic and metaphysics. The philosophers were divided into antagonistic camps. Particularly were the so-called "Realists" and "Nominalists" in constant dispute on the subject of "universals." The former contended that abstract terms in metaphysics represented real things, and were not mere conceptions of the mind; the latter that these terms were only devised to denote qualities inferred from facts, which facts alone were real. To both, however, theology was *Madame la Haute Science*, and the study of logic all scholars deemed of fundamental importance.

The text-books at first most commonly used were: for grammar, Priscian and Donatus; for rhetoric and dialectic, the writings of the Church Fathers, especially those of Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory the Great, allegories like *The Marriage of Mercury and Philology*, by Martianus Capella, and treatises like *The Arts and Discipline of Liberal Learning*, by Cassiodorus; for history, the *Origins* of Isidore of Seville, and the compend of Orosius; for metre, chronology, chronography, etc., various didactic works like those of Bede and Alcuin. Boethius was an authority on mathematics and music, as well as on philosophy. Through his translations, students generally became acquainted with Aristotle; for Greek was in early mediæval times almost completely unknown. But the twelfth century saw a great

broadening of knowledge, and in particular an ever-increasing familiarity with the Latin classics. The classical reading of a noted Englishman of the period has recently been summed up by Dr. Reginald Lane Poole as follows: "John of Salisbury seems to have been ignorant of Plautus, Lucretius, and perhaps Catullus; but he was familiar with Terence, Virgil, Horace (not, however, his *Odes*), Ovid, Lucan, Statius, Juvenal, Martial, Persius, and a number of later poets. If he had read little of Cicero's *Orations*, he knew his philosophical works intimately; and he was well acquainted with Seneca, Quintilian, and the two Plinies. With historians he was more poorly supplied. Cæsar and Tacitus were names to him, and Livy he cites but once; but Sallust, Suetonius, Justinus, and, more than all, Valerius Maximus were constantly at his hand. No doubt his resources made him dependent to a great extent upon the later classical writers—Gellius, Macrobius, Apuleius, etc.—but the range of his reading was certainly superior to that of most professed Latinists of the present day. Such learning was without question unique in the twelfth century; but the fact that it was possible is proof that the mass of Latin literature in attainable manuscripts was far greater than is commonly supposed."

Their classical learning such men as John of Salisbury put to daily use, and they strove to write with elegance and precision. Accomplished Latinists were thought necessary in the employ of any man of power; through their hands all official correspondence passed; and, among men of affairs as well as the clergy, scholarship gave a superior glamour to force of personality.

John of Salisbury († 1180) was preëminent as a scholar, an apostle of classical culture, a humanist. But he was also an active diplomat, and a versatile participant in contemporary disputes. His career has unusual interest. The course of his studies during twelve years abroad he has himself recorded, and we are able to follow him in his journeys here and there after 1136, when he first heard the lectures of Abelard on Mont St. Geneviève, as he proceeded to different places to learn of the

celebrated teachers of his day; Robert of Melun, for example, and Gilbert de la Porrée at Paris, William de Conches and Richard l'Evêque at Chartres, and Peter de la Celle at Provins in Champagne. About 1150 he returned to England to become a member of the clerical staff of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury, to whom he had been recommended by Bernard of Clairvaux. He soon proved himself the most accomplished of Theobald's helpers, and was engaged in many kinds of official business, some of which required great tact. Before 1169 he had crossed the Alps ten times on missions to Rome, and on one occasion had spent three months with Adrian IV., the only Englishman ever Pope, with whom he was on terms of affectionate intimacy, and from whom he is said to have secured a bull authorising the Conquest of Ireland by the English king. He was one of the executors of Theobald's will, and one of the five commissioners who went to Montpellier to fetch the pallium for the consecration of Becket. Afterwards he became the "eye and arm" of the new Archbishop. Though he did not hesitate to point out to Becket his mistakes, he nevertheless faithfully supported him in difficulty and exile, and was with him when he was murdered. He was one of the chief to urge Becket's claim to canonisation, as he had before urged Anselm's, this time successfully. He remained in England until 1176, when he was made Bishop of Chartres. "Vir magnae religionis totiusque scientiae radiis illustratus"—so runs his obituary in the church there, where he lies.

Some three hundred of John's letters are extant, clear witnesses to his keenness of intellect and purity of diction. His two great prose works are the *Polycraticus* and the *Metalogicus*. The former, "The Statesman's Book," which has a descriptive sub-title, *De Nugis Curialium et Vestigiis Philosophorum*, contrasts the vain pursuits of men of his day with the best precepts of the philosophers, pointing out the frivolous or vicious pleasures that are opposed to reason and right. It is a work of vast learning, somewhat miscellaneous, indeed, but greatly praised throughout

the Middle Ages and rich in interest even to-day. In the *Metalogicus*, John defended thoroughly the study of logic, and conveyed to his readers a large part of Aristotle's *Organon*.

Peter Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux, to whom reference has just been made, were the most famous French theologians of the first half of the century. Abelard's name is now inseparable from that of the beautiful Héloïse, whose love for him, as revealed in their passionate letters to each other, had such tragic results for both. But he deserves worthier renown by virtue of his extraordinary intellectual power and bold honesty of scientific attitude. In these respects he rises superior to Bernard, who, on the other hand, was more zealous and uplifted in spirit. Further to contrast the two, Abelard might be called a man of "knowledge"—which, according to a Welsh triad, has three embellishing names, "paths of truth, hand of reason, and strength of genius" —and Bernard a man of "conscience," the embellishing names of which, following the same authority, are "light of heaven, eye of truth, and voice of God." The one a speculative schoolman, the other a faithful mystic, they were naturally opposed in their views of dogma. Bernard, more powerful politically in his day, succeeded in having Abelard's works condemned as heretical by the Council of Sens in 1140. Yet these never ceased to circulate, to the advantage of free thought. One can trace little direct influence of Abelard's opinions on Middle English writers; while few of those who treated religious themes were unaffected by the mysticism of his opponent. In modern times, however, Abelard's fame has grown the greater, and he is now universally recognised as a thinker of high importance.

Amongst the many Englishmen in the twelfth century who first studied and afterwards taught in France, others besides John of Salisbury were Abelard's disciples. Of these one of the most conspicuous was John of Salisbury's own master, Robert of Melun, who had a famous school at Paris, and afterwards at Melun, from about 1130 to 1160. At Mont St. Geneviève the "Robertines" long continued to discuss their

leader's great work "on the nature of God, the angels, and man, on the soul, man's state, his disposition before and after the Fall, and his redemption," the *Summa Theologiae*, which above all gave warrant for his repute as a metaphysician. Robert's most illustrious pupil was perhaps Thomas à Becket, with whom he was closely connected all his life, and through whose favour he was appointed to the see of Hereford, a position which he held at his death in 1167. Another English teacher of note at Paris was Adam du Petit Pont, who died in 1180, Bishop of St. Asaph's. He was a pupil of Peter Lombard († 1160), whose *Sententiae* had enormous vogue. In his *Eulogium* Adam defends the theological doctrines of his master concerning the humanity of Christ against the vigorous attacks made upon them by another prominent Englishman of the time, John of Cornwall (*fl.* 1170). Adam was a friend of John of Salisbury's, but the latter reproaches him with over-subtlety and quibbling.

It is remarkable, indeed, how many Englishmen at this period gained distinction abroad, not merely as teachers, but also as administrators: for example, John of Poictiers, a native of Kent, and a member of the household of Theobald of Canterbury, who from 1181 to 1193 was Archbishop of Lyons; Ralph of Sarr in Thanet, another Canterbury clerk, who was Dean of Rheims from 1176 to 1194; Robert Pullus, Chancellor of the Holy Roman Church (1145-46), who taught at Oxford and Paris; and Master Thomas Brown, a sort of Chancellor of the Exchequer in Sicily.

By exchange, various prominent Frenchmen received preferment in England. Thus Gerard la Pucelle, noted as a teacher at Paris and Cologne, was chosen by Becket to be Bishop of Coventry († 1184). Still more interesting was Peter of Blois (*fl.* 1190). First a student at Tours, Paris, and Bologna, he later gained experience of men as a teacher, legislator (he was for a time keeper of the royal seal in Sicily), and royal ambassador. An aristocrat himself, no one was more familiar with princes and prelates. In England, thanks to his own merits as well as to the favour of Henry II., he occupied such positions as Chancellor to

the Archbishop of Canterbury, Archdeacon of Bath, Secretary of the Queen, and Archdeacon of London—nothing very high. Though superbly vain, he had in reality very distinguished qualities as a scholar. Still extant from his hand are a score of *Opuscula* on theology, some sixty-five sermons, and a large body of letters, which he collected at the request of the King. In his youth, he tells us, he was given to composing poems of a secular character, but later he deliberately abandoned that style of verse for a graver sort. Once, writing to a grammar-teacher of Beauvais, he complains:

> You have remained with the ass in the mire of a very dull intelligence. Priscian and Tully, Lucan and Persius, these are your gods. I fear lest when you die it may be said of you in reproach: Where are your gods in whom you have put your trust?

And again, trying to dissuade a friend from purely secular studies, he pleads:

> What have you to do with these false vanities and follies? What concern have you, who ought to be an organ of truth, with the fabulous loves of the gods of the Gentiles? . . . You have spent your days until old age in the fables of the Gentiles, in the studies of the philosophers, and finally in civil law, and, contrary to the wishes of all who loved you, you have endangered your soul by avoiding the sacred page of theology.

Yet he himself never conquered his taste for the writers of antiquity, and he elaborately defends his practice of quoting from the Latin poets.

Peter, moreover, gives us information of the courts at Canterbury and London. In one letter to a correspondent abroad, he thus exalts the former:

> There are, he says, in the house of my lord the Archbishop of Canterbury, men deeply versed in literature, among whom is found all rectitude of justice, all prudence of foresight, every form of learning. These, after prayers and before eating, exercise themselves assiduously in the reading, arguing, and deciding of causes. All the knotty questions of the kingdom are referred to us, which, being propounded among our fellows in the common auditory, each

in his turn without strife or contention sharpens his mind to speak well, and puts forth with his cunning whatever appears to him most admirable and profitable.

On another occasion, in a letter to the Archbishop of Palermo, he writes as follows:

Your king is a good scholar, but ours is far better; I know the ability and accomplishments of both. You are aware that the King of Sicily was my pupil for a year; you yourself taught him the elements of verse-making and literary composition; from me he had further and deeper lessons; but as soon as I left the kingdom he threw away his books and took to the easy-going ways of the court. But with the King of England there is school every day, constant conversation of the best scholars, and discussion of questions.

This is a situation that should be remembered. The court of Henry II. and Eleanor of Aquitaine was a centre of learned men and poets, as well as of warriors and knights. Distinguished writers of every kind found a welcome at London, one of the largest French-speaking cities in Europe. The domains of the English king comprised about two-thirds of what is now France, and he stood second to none in power. "An illiterate king is a crowned ass," Henry Beauclerc once said. This Henry II. also believed. He had himself been a student under William de Conches, and surpassed his father in the generosity of his patronage. In considering the prominent clergy of his realm one must keep in mind that they were steadily engaged in conflicts of war and wit, that they followed with understanding the proceedings of chivalrous adventure, and listened with sympathy to the narratives of daring exploits. We read of Becket, as a young soldier-statesman, unhorsing one of the most valiant warriors of France in single encounter, and later, as Archbishop, wishing that his sacred office permitted him to retaliate by force on one who angered him. When he travelled to France to arrange a marriage for his king, it is said that 250 boys, gaily attired, went singing before him on the journey, so that even the monarch of France marvelled at his extravagance. The figure of this prelate (the first native since the

Conquest to occupy so high an office) will always appear prominent in the background of any picture of the learned men of his time, not for any important works that he himself wrote, but because he was the occasion of many. He gathered about him a faithful body of admirers and he aroused the ire of as many opponents. Whether right or wrong in the controversies he obstinately waged, he deserves credit for his attitude of respect for letters and his disposition to advance men of note.

In Becket's group were also Robert Foliot, his teacher († 1186), whom he helped to the bishopric of Hereford; Gilbert Foliot, whom he came to hate bitterly, and twice excommunicated, calling him gently "the forerunner of Antichrist and the exciter of all the king's malice"; Bartholomew, chosen Bishop of Exeter in 1160, whom, on the contrary, Becket and others regarded as a luminary of the land; and the Crusader Baldwin, who, after considerable opposition, was elected in 1190 to Thomas's see. These were all men of learning, and wrote books which gave them honour in their time, but which it is hardly relevant to discuss here.

Much more important for our purpose is a study of the achievement of the Norman-Welshman Walter Map—a clerk of Henry II.'s household under Becket, previously a student at Paris under Gerard la Pucelle, an associate of John of Salisbury's, a friend of Gilbert Foliot's, a justice itinerant, a royal ambassador to the Lateran Council at Rome in 1179, who was appointed Archdeacon of Oxford in 1197, and died in 1210. Map's chief work is a book of "Courtier's Triflings," of exceeding refreshment to one who has long been delving in theological burrows. He evidently took his title *De Nugis Curialium* from John of Salisbury's *Polycraticus*, but only to enforce the difference of his purpose. His volume was no systematic arraignment of his age and appeal to the guidance of antiquity, but a commentary on contemporary events, which he believed that it would be useful for future generations to read. The courtiers of Henry II. and his successor did not undervalue

their own importance. They were well aware of the advance of the realm under their leadership, without being pettily puffed up. Just as Richard FitzNeal, the author of the *Dialogue on the Exchequer* (1178-79), was urged to record his knowledge of that subject, and, complying, wrote a valuable historical document, so Map was urged to tell of what had been going on recently in the high society with which he was familiar, and this he undertook, not without reluctance, for he lived a busy life, but with confidence that the performance was worth while. Map makes modest parade of his lack of time. "How," he writes to one who had asked him for a poem—"how can you expect me, the Tantalus of Hades (the court), to give people drink; me, the youth in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, to sing?" But we must not take over seriously his diatribes against the court, for he evidently relished his life there and was a general favourite. Nor need we believe that his too-much-protested lack of skill indicated a feeling of real weakness. Map's book is scrappy and unsystematic (hence his apologies), but these faults are those of temperament, not of intelligence. Without worry, he left the more serious-minded professors to push their dialectics to the limit of meticulous subtlety, to set forth with fine distinction and in careful arrangement the results of their large accumulations of facts. For himself, he was content to tell of the interesting people whom he had seen, and to repeat the good stories that he had heard. He was no withdrawn ascetic, no dull moralist, but a friendly, sympathetic, genial, secular clerk, nearer akin to Chaucer than any man of his age.

Map began his *De Nugis* about 1180, and made public part of it about 1188, but he did not give it final shape till about 1193. In this final form it includes a treatise against marriage with which Chaucer was familiar, entitled *Valerius ad Rufinum de non ducenda Uxore*, Valerius being Map himself, and Rufinus a friend whom the solicitous author hoped to rescue from the disaster of marriage by painting it in gloomy colours. The sentiments of this very popular treatise were applauded by

many another scholar in mediæval times besides the fifth husband of the Wife of Bath.

To Map has been ascribed a large share in the development of the legend of the Holy Grail; but the evidence in support of this view is exceedingly slight. Doubt also attaches to the authorship of much of the so-called "Goliardic" verse that was connected with his name. Bishop Golias was clearly not a figure of Map's creation, but used widely by students in satires on ecclesiastical conditions. The name Golias was reminiscent of Goliath, and suggested derivation from *gula*, the gullet. Characteristically, then, this bishop was pictured as gigantic in Philistinism and abominable in gluttony and lust. He was the head of a large family of riotous and unthrifty clergy, who came to be known as "goliards." Langland's "goliardeis" was "a glutton of words." Chaucer applied the term to the loud-mouthed Miller, the teller of vulgar tales, "And that was most of sinne and harlotryes."

Golias, it seems, had an *Apocalypse* and made a *Confession*, both of which are preserved in poems long attributed to Map.

In the former, Pythagoras appears to the dreamer, resting one hot summer's day under an oak, and guides him into a strange land, where are many distinguished writers of antiquity, in various attitudes, variously occupied. He is observing them, when a flaming angel appears, conducts him in spirit to the gate of heaven, and shows him the mysteries of the seven churches in England. Intently he gazes on a book with seven chapters and seals, containing the lives of them that were set over the Church. As one part after another is opened, the dreamer reads of the evil practices of Pope, prelates, archdeacons, deans, and other officials, especially of abbots. All these things the guide writes upon his brain, and them he remembers, though what he afterwards sees in the third heaven of God's mysteries he straightway forgets, having eaten of supernatural food and drunk of the water of Lethe.

In the *Confession* Golias makes a jovial shrift for sins of lechery and drunkenness: he has spent a frivolous life; he has never been able to resist the wine-cup; his god has been his belly.

Meum est propositum in taberna mori:
Vinum sit appositum morientis ori,
Ut dicant cum venerint angelorum chori,
"Deus sit propitius huic potatori."

These, the best-known lines of the poem, are now widely familiar as part of a drinking-song.

The numerous Goliardic poems written during and after Map's time in England, as Thomas Wright justly observes, are not "the expressions of hostility of one man against an order of monks, but of the indignant patriotism of a considerable portion of the English nation against the encroachments of ecclesiastical and civil tyranny. The spirit which gave rise to them, and which is pictured with remarkable interest in the Chronicle of Matthew Paris, was in activity from the reign of Henry II. to the end of that of his grandson Henry III., during a full century. Lost sight of in some degree during the political movements which followed, it again made itself felt under Edward III., exhibited itself in the nervous satire of *Piers Ploughman*, became powerful in the person of Wycliffe, and after having again been dormant for a period, burst out at last in the Reformation."

Giraldus Cambrensis relates how King Richard, when rebuked by a holy man as follows: "You have three daughters, namely, Pride, Luxury, and Avarice; and as long as they shall remain with you, you can never expect to be in favour with God"—thus replied, after a short pause: "I have already given away those daughters in marriage, Pride to the Templars, Luxury to the Black Monks, and Avarice to the White." Gerald himself remarks that the cloistered monk was but "a barren grain of seed, a seed hidden between stones, and withheld from contact with the earth, by which alone it could yield increase." Plainly the contempt of the secular clergy for the monastic orders at the close of the twelfth century was very great, and much of it found expression in writing. Walter Map's particular abhorrence was the Cistercian. But other poets were

all-inclusive in their disdain. Even monks did not refrain from pointing out the corruption that had taken root amongst themselves.

One of the most biting satires of the period was the *Speculum Stultorum* of Nigel Wireker, precentor of the church of Canterbury, and a close friend of William de Longchamp, Bishop of Ely, the vigorous reformer of monastic abuses.

The hero is an ass called Brunel, who thinks his tail too short, and consults the philosopher Galen to see how it can be lengthened. The latter points out to him his folly, shows him that he is as well off as any one, and tells him the story of the two cows Brunetta and Bicornis, whose tails once got frozen to the ice, so that they could not move. Bicornis cut off her tail and escaped, to grieve for ever after because of her impatience. Brunetta lingered a little until hers thawed out, and was able to rejoice long in her wisdom. But Brunel being still eager for more tail, Galen gives him a recipe and sends him to Salerno to have it filled. Thither the ass goes, but on the way is variously put upon by designing merchants and monks. Half of his tail is bitten off by dogs, and all his goods are lost. Then he repairs to Paris to become a scholar, and joins the English "nation"; but he is too stupid to excel, and he decides to become a monk. No one of the orders satisfying him, he determines to form a new one combining the laxities of all. He tries to win Galen to his order. But his career is suddenly interrupted by the arrival of his old master Bernard, who claims him as his, and degrades him to the position for which he was first and best fitted.

This poem is remarkable for the light it throws on actual conditions, not only in the monasteries, but also in the schools of the time. It is written in elegiacs, and was very often reproduced. Chaucer, in the Nun's Priest's Tale, refers to a story told Brunel when on his way to Paris, of a cock who avenged himself on a priest's son for a slight the latter had done him.

Next to the verses of "Daun Burnel the Asse," the most striking satire on English conditions of the period (*c.* 1184) is the *Architrenius*, or "Arch-weeper," by a Norman, Jean de Hauteville. It is dedicated to Walter de Coutances, Archbishop of Rouen († 1207), a native Briton, who occupied high political offices in England under Henry II. and Richard I., with both of whom he was intimate.

The "chronic grumbler" sets out to find Nature, to seek her aid against the weaknesses she has afflicted him with. He comes first to the palace of Venus, and inflames the hearts of her damsels, the most beautiful of whom he describes minutely; then to the abode of Gluttony, where he tells of the tastes of the gourmands of his day; then to Paris, the centre of Learning, where he observes the poor condition of the students (their mean dress, bad fare, wretched lodgings, and hard work). He laments the vanities of the learned, but bewails the fact that the rich will not give over their luxuries and encourage study. Later he comes to the mount of Ambition, where courtiers assemble; to the hill of Presumption, full of clergy and professors; discovers the hideous monster Cupidity, which prelates should avoid; observes the ancient philosophers in Thule deriding mankind; and finally meets Dame Nature in a flowery plain and hears her discourse on natural philosophy. She gives the sorrowful Architrenius a noble wife, Moderation, and sufficient counsel on married life.

Satire, indeed, being the natural product of an intellectual and alert society, flourished notably in the second half of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth, when from all quarters hailstorms of ridicule descended on idlers, pedants, and fops. Independence, intelligence, and high ideals are everywhere apparent in the frank denunciation of developing dangers. And, amid the temptations of so diverting an age, it required steady purpose to steer a wise course. Should Philocosmia, love of worldly enjoyment, or Philosophia, be the mistress chosen by an ambitious youth to whom the arms of both were open wide, was a question which troubled many besides Athelard of Bath. But the host who, like that devoted student of natural science at the beginning of the century, then decided to "scorn delights and live laborious days," clearly attests the prevailing stimulus to great achievement.

In September 1157, the story runs, were born on the same night Richard I. at Windsor and Alexander Neckham at St. Albans, and both were suckled by the latter's mother, who bared for the prince her right breast and for her own child the left. The one became a brilliant warrior, the other a brilliant scholar. This tale, whether true or not, may be taken to symbolise the actual situation in England at that time: with the same intellectual

nurture most men of prominence were then prepared for public life. The doctors and bachelors of the schools were as keen for struggle as the knights and squires who rode out on adventurous emprise.

Alexander Neckham, professor at Paris when only twenty-three, exemplifies a type of universal scholar which became more frequent in the thirteenth century—theologian, grammarian, man of science, and poet, all in one, more like the friars about to be than the monks among whom he was. Neckham wrote many works of a religious and didactic nature, including a *De Vita Monachorum* and a moralised version of Æsop's Fables; but the most famous are those on natural science, metrical and prose treatises on various aspects of the universe, *De Naturis Rerum*, wherein fact and fable strangely meet and true knowledge is barnacled with superstition.

At Oxford in the reign of Stephen, an Italian, Master Vacarius, gave lectures on jurisprudence, and abridged Justinian for the use of his classes. Specially prominent at the court of Henry II., the great justiciar, Ranulph de Glanville († 1190), not only saw that the English laws were enforced, but prepared, or directed the preparation of, an admirable treatise about them. The now famous work, *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Regni Angliae*, which goes under his name, was almost the first systematic treatment of legal enactment since Roman times, and potent in influence. On it was based the more comprehensive and important law-book of Henry de Bracton (or Bratton), who died, Dean of the Cathedral Church of Exeter, in 1268.

Two circumstances in the closing years of Glanville's life attract our attention. Being, as William of Newburgh relates, at the table of Richard I. when news was brought of the slaughter of the Jews in London, he was at once despatched to deal with the mob. In the same year, 1190, he joined the Crusade recently proclaimed, proceeded by Marseilles to Syria, and was killed at the siege of Acre. The presence of large numbers of Jews in England and the travels to the East of many distinguished

men were of consequence for English learning and literature. It was through Jewish scholars that much Arabic lore was made accessible in the West, and the acquaintance of men at large with Oriental civilisation, first extensively revealed to them by the Crusades, gave a new impulse to science hardly inferior in importance to the new provision of narrative that it procured.

The practice of travel had begun early in England, and students journeyed in all directions in pursuit of new knowledge. As early as 1102, a Saxon Sæwulf visited the Holy Land, and on his return wrote an account of his travels, anticipating a habit that the Crusades confirmed. About the same time, Athelard of Bath, already mentioned, after exhausting the supply of information accessible to him in France, and still insatiate, sought more in Bagdad and various other places in the East. After his return to France he established a school particularly for instruction in Arabic lore, the value of which he himself defended in his *Quaestiones Naturales*, written in the form of a dialogue with his young nephew. Robert of Retines, another English scholar of Arabic, studied "astrology" at Evora in Spain, and helped to translate the Koran in 1143. Later in the century, Daniel of Morley (Norfolk?) left Paris in disgust for Toledo, the intellectual pride of Spain, and brought back to England "a costly multitude of books." His own treatises show large influence of Arabic and Greek philosophy. Thus the extensive appropriation of Eastern science in England in the following era was clearly anticipated.

The interesting fact has newly been pointed out that in the reign of Henry II. there was noteworthy writing by English Jews, who then prospered in London.

Whereas, says Mr. Joseph Jacobs, in the thirteenth century we know only of an insignificant poet, Meir of Norwich; a codifier of Jewish ritual, Jacob Ben Jehuda of London; and a legal authority, Moses of London, in the twelfth century recent research has revealed the names of twenty Jewish authors, some of considerable merit and importance. In particular, the study of the Massora, or text of the Scriptures, was especially prevalent among the English Jews, and led to the compilation of an important Hebrew Grammar

by Samuel of Bristol, which was followed by a still more extensive work on the subject, entitled *The Onyx Book*, by Moses Ben Isaac of London. The chief Anglo-Jewish writer of the twelfth century, however, was Berachyah Nakdan, known as Benedict le Puncteur of Oxford, whose *Fox Fables* resemble those of Marie de France, and were probably derived from the same source. He was also the translator into Hebrew of Adelard's *Quaestiones Naturales* and a French work on Mineralogy, and a *Commentary on Job* by him is still extant in manuscript at Cambridge. Outside Spain no such important works were produced by any European Jews at this period, and it is therefore not to be wondered at that Abraham Ibn Ezra, the most distinguished author of his time and the original of Browning's Rabbi Ben Ezra, visited England in 1158.

The vernacular of the English Jews remained French up to the time of their expulsion (1290). Their learned men were subtle in disputation, and the heresies they promulgated required the close attention of the Christian clerks.

IV

The Anglo-Latin poetry of the monastic period was mostly religious or occasional—on the one hand, hymns, sequences, prayers, *cantica* of divine redemption or in honour of the Virgin, together with instructive works of greater length; on the other hand, elegies, eulogies, complaints, dedications, poems of praise or blame on contemporary conditions and events. To those already mentioned may be added the names of a few other Anglo-Normans well reputed for their Latin verse. The best, perhaps, is Godfrey, Prior of St. Swithin's, Winchester († 1107), a native of Cambrai, the author of a considerable body of *Proverbia*, or epigrams, in the style of Martial. The "Marcial" from whom Gower several times quotes is no other than he. Numerous eulogies by him of English princes and princesses, bishops, abbots, and monks are couched in a "familiar and sweet style" which his contemporaries warmly commended. Reginald of Canterbury († *c.* 1136), a friend of Anselm's, likewise wrote many short poems, and one long one concerning the Eastern

Saint Malchus. To at least eleven recipients of copies of this latter work he devised ingenious, if somewhat laboured, dedications. Reginald also wrote verse memorials of ten saints of his church at Canterbury and other eulogies of leaders. Encomiums, indeed, persisted in vogue throughout the century, and engaged the efforts of many poets. Some are marked by great extravagance of statement and amazing conceits; others seem sincere, betray fine feeling, and have historical worth. Becket is praised, with energy and warmth, in no less than eight anonymous poems.

Lawrence, Prior of Durham and the King's chaplain († 1154), was the most distinguished Latin versifier of Stephen's reign. His chief work is an *Hypognosticon*, nine books of Scripture history, in elegiacs. Verse of changing metre is interspersed with prose in his *Consolatio pro Morte Amici*, modelled on Boethius. Lawrence is further credited with a poem on the city and diocese of Durham, in the form of a dialogue between himself and another monk. In old annals of Durham he is described as "a man of great discretion and honest conversation, skilled in law, endowed with eloquence, well grounded in the divine institutes, and not needing to beg counsel of others in adversity." About 1150 was put into a new shape the *Visio Philiberti*, or *Dialogus inter Corpus et Animam*; and about 1185 Henry of Saltrey (Sawtrey in Huntingdonshire), a Cistercian monk, composed his version of *The Purgatory of St. Patrick*—fine embodiments of two of the most familiar religious themes in early England. Familiar in England as well as on the Continent, we may note in passing, must also have been the wonderful melodies and hymns of Adam of St. Victor, Hildebert of Tours, and Bernard of Cluny, as well as the *Dies Irae* attributed to Thomas of Celano, all of this period or a little after. We still sing, "The world is very evil," "Jerusalem the golden," "For thee, O dear, dear country," etc., in solemn service; and "O day of wrath, O dreadful day," a notable translation of which appears in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, has been treated nobly in music by many composers.

The only conspicuous epic poet of the century was Joseph of Exeter, whose *De Bello Trojano*, composed *c.* 1184 in flowing hexameters, was first printed as the work of Cornelius Nepos. Joseph was a Crusader in sympathy, perhaps also in fact. He dedicated his history to Archbishop Baldwin, and is said to have accompanied King Richard to Syria. Of another epic by him, on the siege of Antioch, only an interesting short passage, exalting the *flos regum Arthurus*, appears to exist. The *Vita Merlini* attributed to Geoffrey of Monmouth, an elegant poem of over 1500 hexameter lines, is particularly important to us because of the light it throws on Welsh legend.

By an accident, which will now be regarded as lucky, we have evidence preserved of dramatic performances in the time of the Conqueror. It happened then that a Norman, Geoffrey, previously a student at Paris, who had come to England by invitation of the Abbot of St. Albans, and was temporarily superintendent of the school at Dunstable, undertook to give there a miracle-play of St. Catherine. For costumes he borrowed copes from St. Albans; but a fire broke out in his house while they were still in his keeping, and all were destroyed. This was a circumstance of sufficient note to find record in the chronicle of St. Albans, of which monastery, in 1119, Geoffrey became abbot. It is clear that the custom of having religious plays in connection with the church services soon became regular, and in Becket's time, as his biographer William Fitzstephen relates, it was definitely established at London. "London," he writes, "in lieu of the ancient shews of the theatre and the entertainments of the scene, has exhibitions of a more devout kind; either representations of those miracles which were wrought by holy confessors, or those passions and sufferings in which the martyrs so signally displayed their fortitude." Nor are we altogether in the dark as to the nature of the performances. About the middle of the century, an Englishman named Hilarius wrote in France three plays adapted to ecclesiastical use, the earliest specimens of the kind extant: a mystery of the raising of

Lazarus, a miracle of the image of St. Nicholas, and a more elaborate Christmas-play of the history of Daniel, in the first two of which French is blended with Latin verse.

Hilarius went to France about 1125 to study with Abelard. He seems to have been a full-blooded person, without austerity. The unique manuscript of his works contains a dozen highly interesting Latin lyrics in rhyming verse, with French occasionally interspersed, which are addressed to various persons of his acquaintance. Amongst them an amatory greeting to an English maiden named Rose is of exceptional grace. Of similar character, no doubt, were the *nugae amatoriae* of Henry of Huntingdon, Peter of Blois, and other learned Latinists, which they sedately deplore having written in days of frivolity. Milton, it will be remembered, depreciated Sidney's *Arcadia* as "vain" and "amatorious," and counted his own youthful verse of small worth in comparison with his great religious epic. Unfortunately, with regard to many mediæval poets, we must be content to take their word that they also wrote "vain, amatorious" poems, and estimate their temper solely by heavy works brought forth with prayer and fasting. Had they been anxious to commit to posterity the fruits of their impulse as well as of their labour, we might be able to justify better by example our high opinion of their imaginative power.

The metres, sentiments, and styles of Anglo-Latin poetry show the effect of influences previously foreign to English art, and when we look about to see whence these came, we discover them readily in lands with which England was intimate, where poetry then richly throve—in Provence, namely, and in Wales.

The relations of Provence to England in the twelfth century were very close, particularly after the marriage of Eleanor of Poitou, in 1149, to the as yet uncrowned Henry II., by which a large part of southern France was united to the English crown; and these relations lasted till well on in the thirteenth century, nearly from beginning to end of the flourishing period of the

troubadours. It is well known that the great love-poet Bernard de Ventadour (1148-1195) was the loyal liegeman of Eleanor, and resided at her court. "Long did he dwell there, singing many a good song of her. And he loved her, and she him likewise." The satirist Macabru (*c.* 1140-1185) is also said to have resided in England for a while on special missions. The politician, Bertran de Born (*fl. c.* 1180), whom Dante put in hell as a begetter of strife, and yet applauded as "a great singer of arms," was most closely connected with the English royal house, to the prejudice of its peace. His warm affection for Henry's eldest son, the young king who never ruled, he exhibited in one or two complaints for his death. It was he who nicknamed Richard "Yea and Nay." Richard himself was a troubadour of no mean skill, like his friend Alphonso II., the powerful King of Aragon, both of whom were generous in patronage to fellow-poets. In Richard's *entourage* were, amongst others, the skilful but conceited Peire Vidal, the popular monk of Montaldon, as well as the sophisticated Arnaut Daniel. In an elegy on Richard, Gaucelm Faidit proclaimed him the "ideal hero of chivalry, comparable to Alexander, Charlemagne, and Arthur, and the honourable founder of tourneys, arms, and festivals." Savaric de Mauleon (1200-1230) took an active part in the struggles against King John. "Above all men did he delight in bounty and gallantry, and love and jousts and singing and playing, and poetry and feasting and spending." John was severely reproached in a *sirventes* by the younger Bertran de Born for his "supineness" in dealing with his foes. And Henry III. was denounced by Sordello (1225-1250) for not attempting to recover his Continental domains. Numerous Provençals visited England in the thirteenth century as a result of the favour shown by Henry III. to the relatives of his queen Eleanor.

The formal influence of Provençal on English poetry is of three kinds, on secular and religious lyrics, on political poems and satires, and on "debates"—working through the *canso*, the

sirventes, and the *tenso* or *joc partit*. It appears to have manifested itself earlier than is usually believed (perhaps before 1100) on Latin writers and by direct channels of communication, not always, if perhaps chiefly, by way of France.

The Norman Thomas, Archbishop of York, Anselm's opponent (who wrote the epitaph in elegiacs inscribed on the tomb of the Conqueror), is said by William of Malmesbury to have composed religious songs in imitation of those of the jongleurs ("si quis in auditu ejus arte joculatoria aliquid vocale sonaret, statim illud in divinas laudes effigiabat"). These songs certainly were not Anglo-Saxon. None contemporaneous of a sort fitted for such service are extant in French. Most probably they were of the type that had developed in Provence out of Latin Church poetry and were therefore easily readapted to liturgical use. Reginald of Canterbury was born at "Fagia," in the south of France (perhaps Tiffauges in the north of Poitou), where his patron the Lord Aimeric lived, and may have learned his methods there. Just as, solely on the basis of Chaucer's assertion that in his youth he wrote "balades, roundels, and virelays," we should be forced to admit that he went to school to the contemporary poets of France, so we must believe from the confessions of the clerks, how they persistently indulged in *nugae amatoriae*, that they were enamored of southern lyric modes. Provençal metres certainly affected those of the Anglo-Latin, Anglo-French, and Middle English lyrics, both religious and secular.

The ideas of chivalrous love, which are generally admitted to have first waxed strong in Provence, are found current in England as early as 1136, for Geoffrey of Monmouth at that date shows his familiarity with them,—perhaps earlier, for William IX., Count of Poitiers (1086-1127), the grandfather of Queen Eleanor, and the first prominent troubadour, was well known in England, "a valiant knight in warfare, and bounteous in love-gallantry; and he knew well to sing and to make poetry." William of Malmesbury, though he deplored

his irreverence, paid a tribute to his wit. In 1101 he led an unsuccessful expedition to the Holy Land, and wrote a poem on the first Crusade. Apparently he was the patron of Bleheris (Bledhericus), the Welsh *fabulator*, to whom Giraldus Cambrensis refers, and whom Thomas, the author of *Tristan*, recognised as an authority in matters of Arthurian romance. Thomas, it should be noted, dedicated his poem to "lovers," and expected them to get comfort from it "encuntre tuz engins d'amurs." And all this was before the flourishing of Marie de France and Crestien de Troyes, whose works presuppose general acceptance among the polite of the principles of courtliness. Only after them do French works breathing this atmosphere obtain international vogue. It was a Provençal who wrote the poem on Perceval which the German Wolfram von Eschenbach utilised as a basis for his, the best, version of the legend of the Holy Grail.

In the form of the *sirventes* were composed poems of a serious nature, political, social, or didactic, and these were often influential to an astonishing degree. King Richard wrote poems of this kind to spite his enemies, and to secure release from prison. We have still three *sirventes* directed against John, and two against Henry III., written by subjects in disgust at their rulers' feebleness. Some of the so-called Goliardic verse. the satires and drinking-songs of England, seem to betray a southern mould.

Still more manifest is the influence of Provençal style, directly or indirectly, on the "debates" of various kinds which were popular in England and France towards the end of the twelfth and at the beginning of the thirteenth century. We have Latin disputes *Inter Aquam et Vinum*, *Inter Cor et Oculum*, *De Mauro et Zoilo*, *De Presbytero et Logico*; but, best of all, the elegant and charming *De Phillide et Flora*, by an Anglo-Norman, not, however, Walter Map, to whom it has often been ascribed. As an Elizabethan translation explains, this is "a sweet poem, containing a civil contention of two amorous

ladies (both virgins and princesses), the one devoted in her love to a soldier, the other affecting a scholar, and, both to maintain their choice, they contend (as women) to commend and reprove either other's love, by the best and soundest reasons they can allege, whether the scholar or the soldier were the more allowable of his profession in women's minds, and aptest and worthiest to be best accepted in ladies' favours." They call on the God of Love to decide, and naturally (considering the authorship of the poem) he decides in favour of the clerk.

One line of the poem reads: "Fert Phillis accipitrem manu, Flora nisum," which suggests the rôle of the hawks, falcons, and other birds in the disputes adjudged by the theoretic courts of love. In this class fall certain Anglo-French debates, and one of the earliest and best of Middle English poems, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, all of the early thirteenth century. Latin, French, and English are here rivals in the same domain, and the English more than holds its own. *The Owl and the Nightingale*, it may be remarked, is superior to the general run of contemporaneous vernacular production, because the author was evidently a disciplined clerk, a trained writer of Latin verse. There is no French element in his vocabulary. He wrote in English, it would seem, for a particular reason, to support a view opposed to that of foreign ecclesiastics and courtiers, much as Wycliffe adopted the vernacular when he found himself at variance with the Roman clergy and desired the support of the people. The awkward rusticity of much Middle English writing is obviously due to the fact that it was the product of men inferior intellectually, of lower station, and less cultivated than those who were conspicuous in their age, and not to the fact that English itself was a rough instrument or Englishmen prevailingly dull. Likewise, the only good bit of continuous early Middle English prose, the *Ancren Riwle*, is graced by distinction of style because it was the work of a cultivated scholar, written, some think, first in Latin, at all events by one disciplined in the Latin schools.

In Wales during this period the situation was much as in Provence. Never has there been in either land a higher stage of intellectual culture, never more virile personalities or more original achievement. The intimate association of the Normans with the Welsh had been fruitful of good results. The followers of the Conqueror who were given by him possessions in the West, found the Welsh sympathetic companions. Intermarriages between representatives of the two races were frequent from the highest down. Nesta, the so-called Helen of Wales, daughter of Rhŷs ap Tewdyr, the last of the Welsh kings, was by Henry I. the mother of the FitzHenries; by Gerard de Windsor, of the FitzGeralds; by Stephen, Castellan of Aberteivi, of the FitzStephens. Robert, Earl of Gloucester, the patron of letters, was her son by Henry I. She was the grandmother of Gerald de Barri. David ab Owen Gwynedd married a sister of Henry II.; and later Llewellyn ab Iorwerth married Joan, daughter of King John. The princes of Powys were always favourites at the English court, notably Owen († 1197), the distinguished author of the *Hirlas Horn*, one of the longest and best Welsh poems of the century. Owen was excommunicated by Baldwin for his indifference about the third Crusade. Yet the Archbishop induced three thousand Welshmen to take the Cross.

The contribution of poetic material by the communicative Welsh to the assimilative Normans no one will question. Indubitably from Wales issued many a stream of myth and fable to swell the river of British romance. But it is not yet clear how much the Welsh influenced Anglo-Latin styles. One is tempted to hold that the exceptionally great vogue of occasional verse in England at the time was affected by the predominance of the same types across the border. And did not the triads stimulate the production of epigrams with which they have so much in common? In any case, it seems no accident that the three most original Anglo-Latin writers of the twelfth century—Geoffrey, Gerald, and Map—were Welshmen. The religious and didactic poems of the period are parallel in both tongues. Like the

English clerks, the Welsh bards denounced the vices of the monks. From Layamon at the opening of the thirteenth to the Gawain-poet of the fourteenth century, Middle English alliterative writers reflect the influence of neighbourhood to Wales. The stories of Horn, of Tristram, and of Beves grew up in the "west country," where Gawain too had his home.

Furthermore, the close contact of the Norse with the various races of western England in the twelfth century deserves emphasis. Not only in Ireland and the Western Isles, but also in Wales and England, the Norsemen had made settlements. "Sodor and Man," the Faroes and Orkneys, together with Iceland and Greenland, were controlled by the Norwegian Church. It was Nicholas Breakspeare (afterwards Adrian IV.) who in 1152 brought the pallium to the first Archbishop of Norway and effected extensive changes in the Church there. When, as a result of his disputes with King Sverrir, the great Archbishop Eystein was forced to flee, he was supported by Henry II. in England for three years. After he made peace with Sverrir, in 1183, he began building the cathedral of Trondhjem in an Anglo-Norman style. Many Norsemen visited the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and Englishmen that of St. Olaf. The literary contributions of one country to the other, during the Norman period, were more on the part of the English to Norway than the reverse. Geoffrey of Monmouth's history, parts of which were versified in Norse, seems to have inspired the *Historia Danica* of Saxo Grammaticus at the close of the twelfth century, the first important Dano-Latin book. Yet Matthew Paris, who dwelt in Norway eighteen months, just after the death of the great historian Snorri Sturluson, and during the lifetime of Sturla, his most famous successor, was not uninfluenced by their mode of saga-narrative. It was not till the time of King Hákon Hákonsson (1217-1262) that the floodgates were opened wide in Norway to French writings and original native production was thereby discouraged.

The reigns of Henry II. and Richard I. were indeed "spacious

times," like those of great Elizabeth. And from them echo sounds that still fill the air. The literature of the Angevin period is not merely prospective, but culminative and definitive in value. Then not only the stories of Britain, France, and the North, but also those of Germany and Spain, were made part of universal literature. In the second half of the twelfth century took final shape the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Cid*. Then flourished also Walther von der Vogelweide and the *minnesinger*, and early in the thirteenth century the greatest of the mediæval German writers of epic and romance.

It is significant that much consideration was given during the same period to the study of metre. The oldest versified book on the subject by an Englishman is that of the Abbot Serlo of Wilton (*c.* 1171), who illustrates by examples each metre he discusses. Whole poems are introduced into the *Ars Rhythmica* of John of Garland, an English-born professor of grammar at Paris, and a prolific maker of manuals and didactic poems. On the other hand, in the *Nova Poetria* of Geoffrey de Vinsauf (dedicated to Innocent III.), the author wrote his own examples, one of them being a lamentation on King Richard's death, in which he bitterly chided Friday, the day of that event: "O Veneris lacrimosa dies! O sidus amarum!" So begins the passage to which Chaucer jokingly alludes in the Nun's Priest's Tale. Evidently Chaucer did not take very seriously the work of this "dear, sovereign master," whom the poet's contemporaries esteemed. Its sterility is evident the moment it is placed in contrast with the invaluable works composed for a similar purpose at about the same time in Wales and Iceland, the *Mabinogion* and the *Edda*, the former anonymous, and containing in its extant redaction material of uneven date (1080-1260), the latter the individual production of that distinguished writer already mentioned, Snorri Sturluson († 1241). The so-called "Four Branches" of the *Mabinogion* were collected into a cycle, for the advantage of the "mabinogs" or bardic apprentices, and supplied to them some of the traditional material of myth, genealogy, and heroic tale

which they were required to be familiar with before they could be included in the close corporation of professional poets. With these was later grouped other information useful to novitiate bards, tales of romantic British history, of Arthur "Champion of Britain," and of Arthur "Flower of Knighthood," the whole forming a unique volume of fascinating narrative.

The name *Edda* itself means "Ars Poetica," and is correctly applied only to the prose work of Snorri, not to the body of mythic and heroic lays (some of them written in the British Isles) that bears by mistake the same title, only with the epithet "Elder" attached. The prose *Edda*, more obviously than the *Mabinogion*, is a manual, and is divided into three parts: the *Gylfaginning*, a book of mythological tales, knowledge of which was necessary for the explanation of the recondite allusions so frequent in skaldic verse; the *Skaldskaparmál*, a poetic dictionary of words and phrases illustrated by numerous examples; and a *Hattatál*, an account, with specimens, of every sort of native metre known to the writer. Bede in the eighth century performed the (so far as we are concerned) thankless task of compiling an *Ars Metrica* of antique mould. Would that he had not thought it a work of supererogation to write about the Anglo-Saxon verse with which he and all his fellows were familiar! Would that some learned person in the twelfth century had seen fit to collect specimens of the native English poetry then extant, that we might not be forced to mere surmise as to what sort and what amount existed! Gerald, in his *Description of Wales*, commenting on the use of alliteration in his day, remarks:

> So much do the English and Welsh nations employ this ornament of words in all exquisite composition that no sentence is esteemed to be elegantly spoken, no oration to be otherwise than uncouth and unrefined, unless it be fully polished with the file of this figure.

We should be glad to know what were the elegant alliterative works in English with which Gerald was acquainted.

The fact that in so many places "schools" of poetry existed, in which traditional artifices were practised, presupposes a general

conscious movement towards the firm establishment of artistic principle. But this was attended by a deterioration of the creative faculty, and, whatever be the cause, it is certain that the English poets, as well as the bards, the skalds, the troubadours, and the *minnesinger* and *meistersinger* of the later thirteenth century, are not so original and free as their predecessors of the Augustan epoch of the Middle Age.

The most interesting Anglo-Latin poems of the thirteenth century were political in theme, concerning particularly the wars of the Barons, the disputes with Scotland and France, the fall of Piers Gaveston, etc. In them are vigorously denounced the corruptions of the reigns of John and Henry III., the avarice and tyranny of the ecclesiastics, the pride and luxury of the nobles, and the failure of justice.

Finally, before leaving our study of the literary tendencies of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth, it is important to note with how many writers of that age Chaucer was acquainted. He knew not only the chief works of his countrymen already mentioned, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Walter Map, Nigel Wireker, Geoffrey de Vinsauf, and the *Polycraticus* of John of Salisbury, but also many of Continental authorship, such as the *De Contemptu Mundi* of Pope Innocent III., the *Aurora* of Peter de Riga, Canon of Rheims, the *Historia Scholastica* of the omnivorous Peter Comestor of Troyes, and the *De Planctu Naturae* and *Anticlaudianus* of the Cistercian Alain de l'Isle. These were all famous books. The first, on the "Misery of Human Life," which Chaucer says that he himself translated, contributed much to *The Prick of Conscience.* The second, a poem of Biblical narrative, was freely used by Gower. Comestor was the chief source of the *Cursor Mundi,* a long metrical romance of religious history. And a great deal of material from Alain de l'Isle, along with the *Consolatio Philosophiae* of the still justly renowned Boethius, was made universally popular by Jean de Meung in the second part of the *Roman de la Rose.* Add to these the *De Gemmis* of Marbod, Bishop of Rennes († 1124),

which yielded Chaucer moralised information about precious stones, the *Alexandreid* of Gautier de Chatillon († 1201), which gave him knowledge of Alexander the Great, together with other works of varied character, and one will find it necessary to assess high the debt of our greatest mediæval poet, as well as of his contemporaries, to the Latin literature of the period. Apart from the *Gesta Romanorum*, an anonymous collection of tales, and the *Speculum Historiale*, an immense and very erudite history of the world and man, by the Dominican friar Vincent de Beauvais, Chaucer seems to have been little served by the Latin treatises of Englishmen or Frenchmen of the thirteenth century. Then, however, the Italians Guido delle Colonne, Jacobus de Voragine (Varaggio), Albertano of Brescia, and somewhat later Boccaccio, contributed Latin works on the Trojan war, lives of saints, an allegory of Meliboeus, and biographies of noted men and women, which he pored over with assiduity, possibly with glee.

V

The thirteenth century—the age of scholasticism—was less generally productive of imaginative literature than the twelfth. It saw the firm establishment of universities, the elaborate arrangement of Christian systems of theology, the definite institution of parliamentary government, the superb culmination of Gothic architecture—as well as other great intellectual, administrative, and artistic achievements. But the literature then produced was in the main that of "knowledge," rather than of "power." It was an age of research and inquiry, of scholarly accumulation and organisation of facts—a practical, industrious, utilitarian, controversial age—the age of science. Then humanism yielded to academicism, and learning loaded the wings of fancy. Instead of romances, tales prevailed; courtly lyrics recoiled before caustic satires; the delicate gave way to the didactic in allegory and debate. To *belles lettres* little was added, while new editions,

manuals, cyclopædias, and other works of erudition appeared in abundance.

In England, in no one of the three languages there spoken, did poetry attain to any height. The prestige of the nation had been snatched away; her monarchs were no longer great world-figures; their courts had ceased to be literary centres; political anxieties harassed the minds of the people. Towards the close of the century numerous documents began to be written in the English vernacular, but almost none were original. Middle English poetry of the period consists largely of translations, made for the benefit of the middle or lower classes, of works that had been accessible in French to gentlefolk for at least fifty years before. Even as the discarded styles of the city-bred regularly come to be accepted as standard fashions by villagers, so the plebeian English poets of the time of Edward I. arrayed themselves, as it were, in the fine garments which their patrician countrymen had laid aside; and these their descendants continued to use until they were worn threadbare.

"The Italians have the Papacy; the Germans have the Empire; and the French have learning." These oft-quoted words state concisely the position of Europe throughout the new century.

The Papacy was the bane of the era. If the Church was a blessing, it was in spite of the Roman *curia*. If Christianity became a more living force than for a long while before in the amelioration of the griefs of humanity, it was in spite of the example of the pontiffs. Greed and avarice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, pride, envy, and all uncharitableness, characterised their sorry fight for political power. Never was Rome's worldly influence in England greater; yet never were her best champions there more distraught by the course of her policy. Never did England contribute so much money to the Popes; yet never did English ecclesiastics more openly and firmly condemn their acts.

The century opened with the great Innocent III. in power at Rome, carrying everything before him with a master hand. It

was he who instigated the fourth Crusade, gave authority to wipe out the heretic Albigenses, forced John to acknowledge his authority, deposed Otho IV. and nominated Frederick II., King of Sicily, as head of the Holy Roman Empire. It was he who presided at the famous Lateran Council of 1215, when, more than at any other time, the Church was supreme over the State. Yet Innocent's efforts were not justified by spiritual results. With humiliation he saw those who set out to free Jerusalem turn home content with the sack of Constantinople. With grief he observed how the Albigensian Crusade led to the brutal massacre of harmless people and the fanatical devastation of peaceful regions. With anger he protested against the way in which Stephen Langton, his nominee to the archbishopric of Canterbury, supported the hostile barons against his vassal John. And we can imagine that his discomfiture would have been complete had he lived to see his ward Frederick defiantly opposing Rome in so fierce a conflict that it taxed her resources to the utmost before she finally won—in the eyes of men.

The German Emperor Frederick II., the grandson of the great Barbarossa († 1190), was known among his contemporaries as "the marvel of the world," and he unquestionably surpassed every other ruler of the time in power and intelligence. Much might be said to his discredit, but, as even his particular foe Pope Gregory IX. admitted, he appeared to have "the gift of knowledge and of perfect imagination." He maintained a brilliant court in Sicily, to which he invited men of learning and men of letters from every land. He encouraged the study of science, the practice of poetry, and the advance of architecture and other arts. He founded the University of Naples, and fostered medicine at Salerno. He visited Jerusalem, and associated on friendly terms with Saracen rulers. Much Arabic lore was through his aid disseminated in Europe. He wrote a treatise on falconry and some troubadour verse. Of him Dante speaks in his *De Vulgari Eloquentia* thus: "The illustrious heroes, Frederick Cæsar and his noble son Manfred, followed after elegance and scorned what

was mean; so that all the best compositions of the time came out of their court. Thus, because their royal throne was in Sicily, all the poems of our predecessors in the vulgar tongue are called Sicilian." Frederick died in 1251, Manfred in 1266; Dante was born in 1265.

Among scholars in the thirteenth century Paris was known as "the mill where the world's corn is ground, and the oven where its bread is baked." The University is called "the parent of the sciences" in its *magna charta*, a bull issued by Gregory IX., in 1231, confirming masters and pupils in the privileges of their association. Stephen Langton was its Chancellor before he went to England, and nearly all his contemporaries distinguished for learning had been students there. Throughout the century Paris remained the supreme intellectual centre of Europe, at which all "doctors" aspired to teach. Of the leading English schoolmen, Roger Bacon was the only one who was not, for a time at least, a teacher at Paris; yet he took his doctor's degree there and lived there many years. Great rivalries existed in the city between teachers of the same subject; bitter controversies arose between the regular and the secular clergy; endless disputes were carried on between monks of old and new types, between mystics and rationalists, the orthodox and the heterodox, philosophers and men of science. According to Cardinal Gaëtani, who afterwards became Pope Boniface VIII., scholars "troubled the universe": they were presumptuous to the brink of folly. The Collège de Sorbonne was founded about 1257 by Robert de Sorbon, chaplain of St. Louis, in the interest of secular clergy. Before 1300 the *quartier latin* of Paris had been definitely established on Mont St. Geneviève, by the location there of many other colleges like the Sorbonne—places of residence rather than of instruction, but formidable to antagonistic prelates as centres of organised democratic influence.

The large difference in spirit between the universities of the thirteenth century and the more irregular schools of the twelfth was due mainly to new methods of dialectics employed in the

study of Aristotle, most of whose works were now for the first time accessible to the Western world. The *Organon*, or "Instrument of Reasoning," had been familiar to John of Salisbury, but not till about 1200 were the physics, metaphysics, and indeed nearly all the peripatetic encyclopædia, introduced into France. Injunctions against reading Aristotle's works were issued in 1207 and 1215, but these were seldom enforced, and in 1231 were practically abrogated. It was the constant endeavour of scholars to reconcile Aristotelian philosophy with Christian dogma. The Englishman Alexander of Hales († 1245) was one of the first to attempt the difficult task of making Aristotle orthodox. The German Albertus Magnus (1193-1280) and the Italian Thomas Aquinas (1221-1274) strove to assimilate his doctrine where that was possible. Alongside of the works of the master, the great commentaries of his Mohammedan exegetes Avicenna (Ibn Sina, † 1037), and especially Averroës (Ibn Rushd, † 1198), were the battle-ground of a host of disputants. "Low down is he among the fools who affirms or denies without distinction," said Dante, and his contemporaries took heed not to err in this regard. Subtlety was expected of every theologian, and by its means seemingly impassable gulfs were spanned. The scholastics had the grandiose ambition to arrange all knowledge according to law and order, while they accommodated ancient philosophy to Christianity. In their hands Faith sought the support of Reason, and Theology wedded herself to Science in a marriage of convenience.

Richard de Bury describes Aristotle as "all-wise," "the prince of philosophers," "the Phœbus of the schools," "the sun of science,"—"a man of gigantic intellect, in whom it pleased Nature to try how much of reason she could bestow upon mortality, and whom the Most High made only a little lower than the angels, . . . [the author] of those wonderful volumes which the whole world can hardly contain." Dante saw him among the great spirits in the noble castle of philosophy, which was entered through the gates of the Seven Liberal Arts—"the Master of

those who know, seated amid the philosophic family; all regard him, all do him honour." "People were there with slow and grave eyes, of great authority in their looks; they spoke seldom, and with soft voices." The enthusiasm for Aristotle among the learned of the thirteenth century amounted to little less than intoxication. He above all was responsible for the zeal in abstract speculation, and thus, indirectly, for the passion of controversy that then mightily prevailed.

The same century, notwithstanding, witnessed the upgrowth of a most important spiritual revival—that of the friars. Though averse to the institution of any more orders of monks, Innocent III. could not well refuse to recognise the new associations of earnest men who were eager to embrace poverty and discomfort in daily service for Christ and the Church. And, once organised, the mendicant friars leapt into prominence everywhere. Speedily they won the hearts of the people and the approbation of the better clergy. Speedily it came to be that nearly all the high thinking, as well as the voluntary plain living, of the time was done by them. Yet the history of the friars offers remarkable contrasts between plan and outcome. The first purpose of the Spaniard Dominic and his disciples was to achieve general orthodox fidelity to Christian dogma; but this required them to sift evidence, explain conflicts, reconcile the old and new in accepted truth. Therefore, while primarily preachers to the people, they were of necessity protagonists of philosophic theory among the learned. Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas were Dominican friars.

The Franciscans, on the other hand, had at first eschewed intellectual training. They saw no advantage in book-learning, but were altogether intent on alleviating human suffering by practical, physical aid. No one could join their brotherhood in full membership who was unwilling to render personal service to lepers. Yet quickly they too found it expedient to change front. Ministration on the sick demanded knowledge of medicine; a large organisation required leaders trained in affairs and skilled in

argument; it was found necessary to provide schools for their novices, and, to fortify their instruction, the best equipment of instruments and books had to be obtained. Considering the principles of St. Francis, it is truly strange that such a man as Roger Bacon should be the most conspicuous Englishman of this Order. To this Order also belonged the great mystic Bonaventura, who, in 1265, was called, but in vain, to the archbishopric of York.

The first friars were self-sacrificing and spiritual almost beyond compare in any age. Little more than a century had passed before all four Orders (Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, and Augustinians) could be accused of

> Preaching the people for profit of the wame (belly),
> And glosing the Gospel, as them good liked.

"Many of these master friars," added Langland, "may clothe them at their own liking, for their money and their merchandise go together; for since Charity hath been a chapman, and chief confessor of lords, many wonderful things have happened in a few years. Except Holy Church and they hold together better, the greatest mischief on earth will speedily arise."

> Friars, Friars, wo ye be,
> *ministri malorum!*
> For many a man's soul bring ye
> *ad poenas infernorum.*

So runs part of a fourteenth-century song. "Freres and feendes ben but lyte a-sonder" was the opinion of Chaucer's Summoner.

The friars settled at Oxford and Cambridge almost immediately after their arrival in England (1220-24), and there established schools, which soon rivalled those of earlier secular foundation both for instruction and research. The first rector of the Franciscan school at Oxford was Robert Grosseteste, who was appointed to that office in 1224, and continued to occupy it until 1235, when he was consecrated Bishop of Lincoln. At his death, in 1253, his fine library passed to the seminary at Oxford,

which had all along been a particular object of his love. Grosseteste was a prolific scholar. The list of works attributed to him in Pegge's life covers twenty-five closely printed quarto pages. It comprises numerous theological treatises, philosophic essays, commentaries on classical writers, and practical works on such subjects as husbandry. He knew Hebrew, translated from the Greek, and wrote poetry in French. His letters show him to have been intimate with all the leaders of his time. He was a man of humane tastes, fond of music and minstrelsy, and provided with a large fund of common-sense. His courage was fortunately sufficient to make fruitful his desire to reform the abuses of the monasteries in his jurisdiction, and to embolden him to deny the worldly claims of Rome. Driven to exasperation by the importunate demands of Innocent IV. for more and more money and benefices, he made inquiry of what sums had already been diverted from English use in that way, and found that alien clerks then drew a revenue of some £41,000—three times as much as the income of the King. When, finally, he was ordered to appoint the Pope's nephew (a youth, not in orders, who had no intention of even visiting England) to the next vacant prebend of Lincoln, he bluntly refused, in words which are astonishingly bold:

> It cannot be that the most holy apostolic see, to which is given by our Lord all power, as the Apostle witnesseth, "to edification and not to destruction," can either command or enjoin anything so hateful as this, or can make any attempt at such a thing. For this would evidently amount to a falling-away, a corruption, and misusing of its most holy and plenary power, a complete departure from the throne of glory of Jesus Christ, and a very close sitting side by side with the two principles of darkness in the seat of the pestilence of hellish penalties. . . . Filially and obediently, I decline to obey, I oppose, I rebel.

Grosseteste kept up his struggle against papal spoliation to the end, and his dying appeal was to "the nobles of England and the citizens of London, and the community of the whole kingdom" (notable words), to arouse them to united resistance to alien aggression. And Matthew Paris, who as a monk resented Grosse-

teste's reforming zeal while the latter lived, nevertheless paid him this tribute, after describing the manner of his decease:

So the saintly Robert II., Bishop of Lincoln, passed away from the exile of this world, which he never loved, at this manor of Buckden, on the night of St. Denis's day. He had been an open rebuker of pope and king, the corrector of bishops, the reformer of monks, the instructor of the clergy, the support of scholars, the preacher of the people, the persecutor of the incontinent, a careful reader of the Scriptures, the hammer of the Romans, whom he despised. At the table of bodily food he was liberal, plentiful, courteous, cheerful, affable; at the table of spiritual food devout, tearful, penitent; as a prelate sedulous, venerable, indefatigable.

Grosseteste was closely attached to Simon de Montfort, and the guardian of his son. Simon is not a literary figure, but the mention of his name will serve to recall—what it is well to keep in mind when considering the conditions that then affected poetic production—the civil struggles during the reign of Henry III., the battles of Lewes and Evesham, and all the distracting turmoil of a troublous time when England was but slowly learning the value of unity of sentiment amongst all classes of the people, and coming to understand the value of her national heritage. Simon was exalted in heroism and became the subject of patriotic song.

He is called de Montfort;
He is the *mount*, he is the *strong*;
He hath great chivalry.
This is true and I agree:
He loveth right and hateth wrong;
He shall have the mastery.

So we read in an Anglo-French *Song of the Barons*. And part of an Anglo-Latin *Song of Lewes* runs as follows:

They call Simon a seducer and a traitor;
But deeds show and prove him true;
Traitors fall away in necessity;
They who fly not death, are in verity.

The learned Adam Marsh († *c.* 1257) was intimate with both

Grosseteste and Simon. Like the former, he was a Franciscan teacher at Oxford, a man of piety and enlightenment, as his numerous letters bear witness. His former fame as a theologian seems to have had a sound basis in various works of comment and exegesis.

He and Grosseteste were lauded as "perfect in all wisdom," "the greatest clerks in the world," by one, their pupil, whose renown to-day far exceeds theirs—the illustrious Roger Bacon (1214-1292). Roger Bacon was a scholar of astonishingly great attainments, endowed with a keenness of vision that marks him as unique among men of his age. He is now specially celebrated as "the father of experimental science," but he perhaps deserves higher praise for the universality of his knowledge and the penetration of his judgments. He was not only a physicist, a chemist, and a mathematician, but also a linguist, a man of letters, and a philosopher. He wrote a Greek and a Hebrew grammar; he was familiar with the Latin classics and the books of the Arabs; Chaldee also he thought necessary to any one who would advance far in science. Still more remarkable, however, are Bacon's opinions of the scholars and the schools of his day. Some of these are extremely haughty and patronising; some, it is possible, are unjust; but all are supported by definite accusations; and it is surprising how closely they accord with those of modern critics. Never has the vanity and futility of scholasticism been more plainly exposed; never has the advantage of experiment over mere speculation in scientific study been more strongly set forth; seldom has the domain of knowledge been more lucidly descried. Yet it is almost by accident that we are in possession of the fruits of Bacon's thought. With great difficulty he secured an opportunity to write. The superiors of the Order which he had been indiscreet enough to enter, viewing his recondite researches with suspicion, kept him in confinement for several years at Paris, and deprived him even of pen and ink. It required the explicit command of Pope Clement IV., about 1265, to enable him to produce his chief works. The first of them, the *Opus Maius*, an encyclopædia of facts concerning the sciences, was finished in the

incredibly short time of fifteen months, and was followed immediately by his *Opus Minus*, a summary of it with elaboration of certain parts, and an *Opus Tertium*, which served as an introduction to the whole.

It is evident that a large body of scholars together with Bacon at Paris regarded the achievement of such men as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas in a light quite different from that which has for so many centuries consecrated their memory. Particularly did they reproach the theologians for their ignorance of natural science, which, as a result of the great impetus given to that study from Arabic treatises now newly made familiar in the West, seemed to them destined to revolutionise the manner and object of scholarly research. Several centuries of further inquiry have rendered valueless to us most of the conclusions that Bacon and his contemporaries reached, and have caused such modern scientific men as are without imagination and sympathy to ridicule the ignorance they displayed,—whereas the monuments of philosophy erected by the speculative schoolmen still seem a marvel to metaphysicians. But natural science was then in its infancy, and we should feel nought but admiration for those with visions clear enough to insist on its importance.

Among Bacon's studies were magic, alchemy, and astrology; but these he pursued as a seeker for truth, impatient of the superstitions and shams that in his time were spread by many ignorant clerks and debased jugglers for their own profit. His superior knowledge of the secret processes of nature gave rise, however, to the absurd idea that he was seduced by spirits of the black art, and this idea kept on accumulating belief until his name became more familiar to men as a magician than as a philosopher. In the reign of Elizabeth a *History of Friar Bacon* appeared, containing nought but a succession of the fantastic marvels that he was imagined to have achieved. On this book Robert Greene based his *Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bongay*, which, "as played by Her Majesty's servants," was printed in 1594. Of Bacon's supposed miracles the most

notorious, perhaps, was the making of a brazen head "by the which he would have walled England around with brass." Before him Pope Sylvester II. was reputed to have fashioned a similar brazen head, which served as an oracle; and it was fabled that Albertus Magnus framed another which talked so freely that Thomas Aquinas, while Albert's pupil, broke it into pieces angrily because it disturbed his study. Even Grosseteste was credited by his countryman Gower with a like achievement. And "Old Hodge Bacon and Bob Grostead" are mentioned together in *Hudibras*. Michael Scott, who died in 1291, just a year before Bacon, a learned man and much travelled, who was honoured by Frederick II. and wrote important scientific treatises, appears in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* as

> A wizard, of such dreaded fame,
> That when, in Salamanca's cave,
> Him listed his magic wand to wave,
> The bells would ring in Notre Dame!

Likewise in the thirteenth century (as appears from the works of Gervase of Tilbury, Alexander Neckham, and Vincent de Beauvais), as well as in the fourteenth and fifteenth (witness the references in Gower, Lydgate, and Hawes), the poet Virgil was represented as an enchanter, and many strange tales were told of his wonder-working power. These, too, were embodied in a late prose romance called *Virgilius*, which explained how his marvels were done "by witchcraft and necromancy through the help of the devils of hell." One of the most celebrated of Virgil's exploits was also ascribed to Bacon, namely, the fashioning of a wonderful perspective glass. Of it Gower writes as follows:

> When Rome stood in noble plight,
> Virgil, which was then parfite (perfect),
> A mirror made by his clergy,
> And set it in the townës ee (eye),
> Of marble, on a pillar without,
> That they for thirty miles about,

By day and eek also by night,
In that mirror beholdë might
Their enemies, if any werë.

The narrative in full may be found in the Oriental collection of tales known as *The Seven Sages*, which was current in Latin, French, and English redactions of the thirteenth century.

To this "Roman mirror" Chaucer alludes in the Squire's Tale, where he pictures the crowd considering the mirror of glass of like properties, which was one of the gifts sent by the King of Arabia and India to Cambynskan (Genghis Khan) of Tartary. The poet may have been familiar with the account of China by the Venetian traveller Marco Polo, who in 1275 visited the court of Kublai Khan, and greatly whetted the curiosity of Westerners concerning the Orient by what he wrote on his return. Chaucer's Franklin's Tale also turns on feats of magic. The magician of Orleans whom the squire Aurelius consults was able to effect most remarkable illusions, even to making the rocks on the coast of Brittany disappear without trace. This resembled an achievement ascribed by Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Celtic Merlin, that of transporting the Giant's Dance from Ireland to Salisbury Plain. In the thirteenth century Merlin's fame as a necromancer was at its height, and naturally enough so, for all the erudite of the time were absorbed in the new revelations of Oriental magic, and their preoccupations affected the thought of the people at large.

Spenser, following earlier traditions, represents Merlin as making a glassy globe which showed the approach of enemies and discovered treason. Still more interesting is his account of how the enchanter started to erect a wall of brass around Caermarthen, and how, being suddenly called away by the Lady of the Lake, he commanded his "thousand sprights" to bring the work to "perfect end."

In the meanetime, through that false ladie's traine,
He was surpris'd, and buried under beare,

Ne ever to his worke returned againe;
Nath'lesse those fiends may not their work forbeare,
So greatly his commandement they feare,
But there doe toyle and traveile day and night,
Untill that brasen wall they up doe reare.

It will be noticed that, like those of Virgil, Merlin's helpers are "fiends." Merlin himself was reputed to be the son of a fiend. In the imagination of many, profound acquaintance with the secrets of nature was tantamount to familiarity with the devil. Even in the age of the Reformation Dr. Faustus († 1538?) and Paracelsus († 1541) were anathematised as associates of Satan, probably because sceptical of religious truth as then accepted by the faithful. The ignorant and timorous clergy who in the thirteenth century denounced the scientific researches of the time, were stirred to opposition by two other reasons: first, because such studies had been started by Mohammedans; and second, because they were eagerly prosecuted by Jews. Were not Europeans even then carrying on crusades to free the Holy City from Saracen control? And was it not true, as Chaucer's Prioress felt, that in the hearts of Jews "our firste fo, the serpent Sathanas . . . hath his waspes nest"? In 1255 Little Hugh of Lincoln was supposed to have been murdered by English Jews; and Matthew Paris, at the end of his graphic description of the outcome of that event, remarks: "The other Jews who shared in the guilt, to the number of 994, were taken to London and imprisoned there; and if any Christians pitied them, they were only dry tears which their rivals the Caorsines [Christian usurers] shed." Matthew had probably in mind the "dry tears" which his great contemporary Snorri of Iceland represents the malicious Loki as having wept at the death of the innocent Baldr, who, as pictured in the *Eddas*, resembles the Christ. In 1264 there was a fierce slaughter of the Jews in London. In 1290 over 16,000 were expelled from the land.

Evidently it seemed to Christian sciolists and zealots that the "higher critics" of the period were striving to subvert the faith.

This assumption, of course, was unwarranted. But are not modern critics equally dull who regard the fables of magic that were then spread primarily as stories, "for such as delight in novelties," as affording ground to inveigh seriously against the Middle Ages as an era of intellectual darkness? Grant that men formerly were more credulous than we in matters concerning which knowledge had not yet been acquired, they were not more unenlightened in other regards. On this point Charles Lamb speaks wisely in his *Essay on Witches*:

> We are too hasty when we set down our ancestors in the gross for fools, for the monstrous inconsistencies (as they seem to us) involved in their creed of witchcraft. In the relations of this visible world we find them to have been as rational and shrewd to detect an historic anomaly as ourselves. But when once the invisible world was supposed to be opened, and the lawless agency of bad spirits assumed, what measures of probability, of decency, of fitness, or proportion—of that which distinguishes the likely from the palpable absurd—could they have to guide them in the rejection or admission of any particular testimony? That maidens pined away, wasting inwardly as their waxen images consumed before a fire—that corn was lodged and cattle lamed —that whirlwinds uptore in diabolic revelry the oaks of the forests—or that spits and kettles only danced a fearful innocent vagary about some rustic's kitchen when no wind was stirring—were all equally probable where no law of agency was understood. . . . There is no law to judge of the lawless, or canon by which a dream may be criticised.

Of the maker of the steed of brass Chaucer says:

> He waytede many a constellacioun
> Er he hadde don this operacioun.

And it is a fact that astrology went hand in hand with magic. Yet here again it is worth while to remark that while many rogues (like Dousterswivel in *The Antiquary*) preyed by feigned knowledge on the credulity of simple people (simple people still exist!), there was much praiseworthy study of the stars.

The English men of science, says Mr. Robert Steele, were among the first in Europe to receive and spread the knowledge of astronomy, and they speedily came to the forefront. The best known of them all is John of Halifax, whose treatise on astronomy, founded on the Arabic of Alfaragan,

exists in innumerable MSS., and ran through sixty editions in the first century of printing; while the works of forty writers, nearly all Oxford men, remain to attest the fruitfulness of this period [1270-1340]. But the theoretical astronomy of the day was fundamentally wrong, and had to be proved so by centuries of toil.

Chaucer, in his Canon's Yeoman's Tale, brilliantly exposes the deceptions practised by certain devotees of the "slidyng (slippery) science," and no one knew better than he of the "elvish craft" of "multiplying." He mentions Hermes, "father of philosophers," the inventor of alchemy, and Arnold of the Newe Toun (Arnoldus de Villa Nova), a thirteenth-century authority, whose "Rosarie" treated of that theme. He points out further that "this science and this cunning" was of the "Secree of Secrees," alluding to a popular treatise of the same epoch, attributed to Aristotle; and he doubtless was acquainted with the great encyclopædia *De Proprietatibus Rerum* by Bartholomæus Anglicus, of which we shall later speak.

Roger Bacon thought that astronomy was "the better part" of medicine. In the statutes of New College, Oxford, given in 1387, medicine and astronomy are mentioned as one and the same science. Being a good practitioner, the Doctor in the *Canterbury Tales* was "grounded in astronomye." He had read the chief medical works then in repute.

> Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
> And Deiscorides, and eek Rufus;
> Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galien;
> Serapion, Razis, and Avicen;
> Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn;
> Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.

Of these authorities six were Greeks. Æsculapius, god of medicine, was the son of Apollo; Hippocrates (Ypocras), the most illustrious of physicians, lived from about 460 to 377 B.C.; Dioscorides, Rufus, and Galen flourished in the first and second, and John of Damascus in the eighth centuries of our era. Rhazes, Haly, Serapion, and Avicenna were all Arabs of the tenth and eleventh

centuries. Averroës, the famous Moorish scholar, died in 1198. Constantinus Afer, born at Carthage, and monk of Monte Cassino, was one of the founders of the school of Salerno in the eleventh century. But the last three were Englishmen, who all wrote medical books with florid titles: Gilbert, of whom little is known, compiled about 1290 a *Laurea Anglicana*; Bernard Gordon, who studied and taught at Montpellier, a *Lilium Medicinae*; and John Gatesden, professor at Oxford, a *Rosa Anglicana*. The two latter are supposed to have died about the same time (in 1317?).

The Doctor's "study was but little on the Bible." Dante put Hippocrates, Dioscorides, Galen, Avicenna, and Averroës in limbo, the first circle of hell, "containing the spirits of those who lived virtuously, but without faith in Christ." And we are reminded that much scepticism prevailed in the thirteenth century, which greatly concerned the pious of the Church. This was, of course, nothing new. Far from being purely "the ages of faith," as they are so often described by ecclesiologists and romancers, the Middle Ages throughout were disturbed by sceptical inquiry. In the time of the audacious Abelard, we recall, was written *Aucassin et Nicolete*, in which appears this striking passage, the speech of the hero when he was warned that his amorous passion might keep him out of Paradise:

In Paradise what have I to win? Therein I seek not to enter, but only to have Nicolete, my sweet lady that I love so well. For into Paradise go none but such folk as I shall tell thee now: Thither go these same old priests, and halt old men and maimed, who all day and night cower continually before the altars, and in the crypts; and such folk as wear old amices and old clouted frocks, and naked folk and shoeless, and covered with sores, perishing of hunger and thirst, and of cold and of little ease. These be they that go into Paradise; with them have I nought to do. But into Hell would I fain go; for into Hell fare the goodly clerks, and goodly knights that fall in tourneys and great wars, and stout men at arms, and all men noble. With these would I gladly go. And thither pass the sweet ladies and courteous that have two lovers, or three, and their lords also thereto. Thither goes the gold, and the silver, and cloth of vair, and cloth of gris, and harpers, and makers [poets], and the prince of this world. With these I would gladly go, let me but have with me Nicolete, my sweetest lady.

It was the heresies of Peter Waldo and other reformers that gave a pretext for the Albigensian Crusade. Later in the thirteenth century existed a widespread Averroist cult, the leader of which, Siger de Brabant, was accused of heresy in 1277 and secretly done away with. "Satellites of Satan" the Averroists were called by Martin IV.; but they long continued to perpetuate the heresies of Aristotle and his pagan commentators. Indeed, considering the ferment of free thought in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it is a wonder why the Reformation was so long delayed. The *libido sciendi* was never more rife.

An attitude of compromise is apparent in the teachings of the most notable philosopher of Europe at the close of the century, namely, John Duns Scotus: he was orthodox in faith, and accepted as final the words of the Bible concerning the questions of the soul; but he was a sceptic in all that came within the sphere of the mind, and held almost a pantheistic view of God. The history of the life of this great scholastic is thus summed up in the inscription on his tomb at Cologne: "Scotia me genuit; Anglia me suscepit; Gallia me docuit; Colonia me tenet." He was born, it appears, about 1265, at Dunse in Berwickshire, Scotland, was a fellow of Merton College, early joined the Franciscan Order, in 1301 was chosen professor of theology at Oxford, went to Paris in 1304, became regent of the University there, and died, during a visit to Cologne, in 1308. He led his Order in their defence of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, which the Dominicans had attacked; he protested against the intemperate admiration of Aristotle; he advocated an out-and-out realism in philosophic theory. In argument he showed extraordinary acumen, and his criticism of prevailing views was a wholesome deterrent to theological one-sidedness. His teaching met with immense success both at Oxford and at Paris, and he became the head of a great body of disciples, who disputed concerning his doctrines without end or result.

Duns Scotus's death marks the passing of the great era of

scholasticism. In England, as we shall see, several of his pupils carried on his work brilliantly; but their dialectics were more and more turned to social and political problems of general interest. On the Continent henceforward the procedure of logic steadily degenerated, subtlety passing into sophistry, keenness into casuistry, and ingenuity into finesse. The argumentation of the later schoolmen in both England and France is, for the most part, mechanical and conventional, without any of the sure grasp of fact, the lofty power of imagination, and the idealistic vision of the great leaders of the thirteenth century.

This century, famous for the colossal monuments of the intellect that it raised, was also preëminent for magnificent architecture; and it is one and the same form of genius that thus variously manifested itself. Recently, Mr. E. S. Prior has written, in a *History of Gothic Art in England*, as follows:

> It was the logic of the Parisian that brought to his Gothic both its extreme excellence and its decay: the *science* of vault construction fell in with his bent. The idea once having attracted him, his logical faculty compelled him to follow it to the end. His vaults rose higher and higher; his poise and counterpoise, his linkage of thrust and strain grew more complicated and daring, until material mass disappeared from his design, and his cathedrals were chain-works of articulated stone pegged to the ground by pinnacles. But in the thirteenth century he had a spirit of art that was a power in him as great as his logic; that his art could not assimilate such science showed how great the endowment was. Combined they advanced from Notre Dame to Amiens, from Reims to Beauvais. Beauvais was magnificent, but it leapt too high! The aspiration of design had soared beyond the conditions of matter. Reason had to assert itself, but thus it was that the logical motive quenched the artistic. Experiment had given place to knowledge, and architecture for a time became a repetition of stereotyped excellences, the stock-in-trade of guilds of constructionists.

The architecture of England in the thirteenth century contrasts markedly with that of France, and the reasons for the unlikeness, as clearly stated by Mr. Prior in the following paragraph, are of interest to students of the vernacular literature in the two countries during the same period, for in both cases they are the same:

It is the continuance of monastic direction in our English style which really gives the explanation of its want of sympathy with the French. In the Île de France art had grown up under a peculiar social stimulus. Philip Augustus had united with the communes against the abbots, and the great cathedrals were built in symbol of the confederation. A school of secular artists arose; masons and sculptors, in whose enormous works the whole people had a share. Cathedral-building became the passion of the community rising in revolt against the pressure of monastic domination. Thus the great "French Gothic" was "laic," but the English remained continuously "cleric," and the one borrowed but little from the other. On the Continent the "laic" school, superseding the "monastic," produced those acknowledged masters of the craft—who built all over Europe on the French model. But in England, save in the design of Westminster Abbey, there is hardly anything that suggests a consciousness of the great works on the other side of the Channel. The monastic was still the force in our architecture. Just as at its beginning this had been Benedictine, so afterwards the vigour of reformed monasticism carried it onward, but always with an increasing leaven of the native Saxon heritage that had come to it through the Celtic memories of the first British Church.

Thirteenth-century vernacular literature in England was also "cleric," while that of France was "laic"; and the two were in the main unsympathetic. There is very little indeed of Middle English production before 1300 which may not properly be called monastic: heroic and pious tales, legends, lives of saints, metrical chronicles, religious and didactic verse, books of edification and instruction. Even the French romances that began to be freely translated in the reign of Edward I. were revised in a religious spirit. From Layamon at the opening to Robert of Gloucester at the close of the century, there is hardly anything that can be called "laic" in the sense used by the writers on architecture. There are no authors in England to correspond to the aristocratic Joinville and Philippe de Beaumanoir, to the court minstrel Adam de la Halle, or the vagrant pamphleteer Rustebeuf, not to mention the *bourgeois* satirist Jean de Meung († 1305), surnamed "the Voltaire of his age." We have only an occasional fabliau like *Dame Sirith*, only a rare bit of light-hearted satire like *The Land of Cokaygne*, only a single snatch (*The Fox and the Wolf*) from that inimitable work the *Roman de Renart*. The *Roman de*

la Rose must await the next century to be translated in either part. The great prose romances of love-gallantry, which were the last French fruits of the chivalric impulse, seem hardly to have been known among the unrefined of England. "The monastic was still the force" in our literature.

Yet this native production was not devoid of merit. Layamon is an improvement on Wace. *The Owl and the Nightingale* surpasses any debate of the sort in French. Some of the lyrics of the period are remarkable for a sweet sincerity and a pleasing spontaneity due to unfettered art. Here we have lesser counterparts to the massive Norman-French cathedrals, to the noble chapter-houses and cloisters, to the lovely lady-chapels, and the picturesque parish churches, that in England have a distinction and a charm quite their own. The *Ancren Riwle* was probably written by the Bishop Poore under whose direction Salisbury Cathedral was begun. The one is as distinctly the most perfect work of Early (Middle) English prose as the latter is the most perfect cathedral in the Early English style. Both are restrained and harmonious as no other productions of similar kind. And the *Ancren Riwle* is as characteristically and sympathetically English, in contrast with such a careful work of the "domaine royale" as the *Somme des Vices et des Vertus*, composed in 1279 by Friar Lorens at the command of Philip III. of France, as the Cathedral of Salisbury (1220-58) is characteristically and sympathetically English in contrast with that of Amiens (1220-82), though the latter is grander and more tectonically correct.

It is not by accident that over the portal to the beautiful chapter-house of Salisbury were carved realistic figures of the Vices and Virtues (including "the smiler with the knife beneath his cloak"). The sculptures of the noble Cathedral of Wells, inspired by the genius of the English Joscelin († 1242), reveal the preoccupation of others than men of letters with the past history of the nation. Even if they are the work of Continental artists, they nevertheless recall the achievements of English ecclesiastics and kings. As "sermons in stone," they correspond to con-

temporary pleadings on parchment. Unhappily no such advance was made by sculptors in England as that which followed the revival in Italy by the well-known Niccolà of Pisa († 1278). No painters arose to vie with the Florentine Cimabue (1240–*c.* 1302), the so-called "father of modern painting," or with Giotto (1276-1337), his more illustrious pupil, the designer of famous frescoes and the builder of the great campanile at Florence. But English architects continued to erect structures of wonderful grace, to serve as permanent evidence of the artistic spirit abroad in the land before the poetic ideas then current found worthy expression. Under the direction of Henry III., a monarch of alien taste and temper, Westminster Abbey was erected in the pure French style; yet, by reason of its sepulchres, it has become the chief monument of British glory. In foreign types of verse, which were about the same time established in England, along with forms of earlier use, were and are still conveyed the abiding ideals of the nation.

VI

Every century in its humour! If the eleventh was melancholic, the twelfth choleric, and the thirteenth phlegmatic, the fourteenth was surely sanguine.

The spirit of independent nationality, making all hearts to beat in generous sympathy and all minds to cohere with a common thought, ever stimulates high hope and original undertaking. The muse of Poetry attends the unified struggle for ideals.

> Her track, where'er the Goddess roves,
> Glory pursue, and generous shame,
> Th' unconquerable mind and Freedom's holy flame.

The thirteenth century saw nationalistic ideas pullulating among all classes in England, but these only slowly grew strong and came to fruition in recognised agreement. In John's time the English were ready to accept a French prince as their sovereign. By 1300 even the suggestion of a foreign monarch

would have seemed intolerable. In the first part of the century the foreigners Stephen Langton and Simon de Montfort were beloved leaders of the people; but later the indignation against the Poitevin Peter des Roches and the Gascon Piers Gaveston was intensified to violence by their alien birth. The great continuous cause of complaint against Henry III. was his favouritism for foreigners. Edward I. tried to emphasise his position as the head of a nation, rather than as the sovereign of feudal barons, but only after the Peace of Brétigny, in 1360, did English kings cease to be technically vassals of the kings of France.

In the fourteenth century originality first becomes genuinely characteristic of Middle English literature. Then, as never before, specially gifted individuals managed to separate themselves from the crowd by virtue of superior art. And their distinction was such as to heighten the credit of the country they loved. The genial spirit that tenants the verse of Chaucer is English. Langland's harsh voice is English too, and that of the robustious Minot, the emotional Rolle, the serene Gawain-poet, and the courageous Wycliffe. Gower, working in the old spirit, made his first English poem, the *Confessio Amantis*, as a liegeman for his lord—"a book for King Richard's sake"—but before he died he also became aware of the new and great light of national achievement that had fully dawned: he changed his dedication to "a book for England's sake." Even when writing French, he proclaimed his patriotism: "O gentile Engleterre, à toi j'escrits." The fourteenth century was the age of nationalism.

There is no need to discuss here the general conditions of Europe in this new era, or do more than mention the strife of the rival popes at Rome and Avignon, the struggle with Scotland, and the Hundred Years' War. It will be sufficient to speak briefly of a few Anglo-Latin writers who were then prominent. And most of them, it is noteworthy, were connected with Oxford, which had by this time become a truly great intellectual centre. The foundation of Merton and Balliol Colleges has already been referred to. Exeter was founded in 1314, Oriel in 1326, Queen's

in 1340, and New College (by William of Wykeham) in 1379. At Cambridge, Peterhouse dates from about 1284, Clare from 1326, Pembroke from 1347, Gonville from 1348, Trinity Hall from 1350, and Corpus Christi from 1352. The Universities of Cracow, Heidelberg, and Prague existed in Chaucer's time.

At Oxford in the first half of the fourteenth century studied three distinguished pupils of Duns Scotus—William of Ockham, Walter Burleigh, and Thomas Bradwardine. William of Ockham (1270-1349 ?) was a member of the Franciscan house there, and was an earnest advocate of the evangelical principles of his Order. His chief fame, however, depends on his lectures on logic at Paris. His attitude was revolutionary in regard alike to political theory and to dialectics, both of which persistently occupied his original and fertile mind. His philosophy consisted in a new development of nominalism, which is sometimes called terminalism. He was sceptical of the value of studying dogma by the scholastic method, asserting that theology was beyond its sphere. His general scorn for the instruments of the schools in the inquiry after spiritual truth helped in their abandonment. He was a vigorous opponent of Roman errors, an open challenger of papal authority. He supported Louis of Bavaria in his struggle with Pope John XXII. From matters of state he desired the Church to keep aloof. In 1339 the Faculty of Arts at Paris forbade the teaching of his doctrines, but by 1400 they were widely accepted among scholars and zealously promulgated by a host of disciples. William helped to mould the thought of Wycliffe and of Luther.

Walter Burleigh (1275-1345 ?) is chiefly famed as a commentator on Aristotle, and his works alone would far more than have sufficed to furnish the little library, "clad in black or red," which Chaucer's Clerk of Oxenford kept at the head of his bed, in preference to "robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrye"; for Burleigh is reputed to have written no less than 130 treatises on "Aristotle and his philosophye." He studied at Merton College and at Paris, and was chosen tutor of the Black Prince. Doubtless of him it could be said that "gladly wolde he lerne and gladly

teche." None of his works had such vogue as a small volume, frequently printed, *De Vita et Moribus Philosophorum*, full of interesting biography and anecdote concerning some 120 poets and philosophers of ancient times.

Thomas Bradwardine, another student at Merton, was born about 1290, and died of the plague in 1349, just after having been consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury. He early attained eminence at Oxford in mathematics and astronomy, as well as in metaphysics and theology; and his great work *De Causa Dei contra Pelagium* was based on lectures given there. This vast treatise was published in 1618 in a folio volume containing nearly 1000 pages. In it Bradwardine maintained the Augustinian doctrine of grace as opposed to merit in obtaining heavenly reward, a doctrine that, probably under his influence, the author of *The Pearl* embodied in beautiful verse. Both these writers were men of fervent piety and loving charity as well as erudite scholars. Bradwardine was private chaplain of Edward III., accompanied him on his travels, and heard his confession. We imagine the writer of *The Pearl* as eminently fitted for a like position. Chaucer mentions Bishop Bradwardine, along with St. Augustine and Boethius, as one who could "bolt to the bran" the question of God's foreknowledge and man's free-will.

> Witnesse on him, that any perfit clerk is,
> That in scole is gret altercacioun
> In this matere, and greet disputisoun,
> And hath ben of an hundred thousand men.

Another Oxford divine, Robert Holcot (†1349), who discussed the same subject, differed from Bradwardine in emphasising the necessity of free-will as antecedent to merit. Him too Chaucer had in mind when telling the Nun's Priest's Tale and "the moralitee thereof." From Holcot's *Moralitates*, or *Exempla*, he drew considerable material for the learned talk of the Nun's Priest.

Bradwardine and Holcot, together with Richard FitzRalph,

Archbishop of Armagh (who so powerfully conducted the struggle of the English secular clergy against the mendicants), belonged to the group that associated with the celebrated Richard of Bury, Bishop of Durham—a group of finely cultivated men, devoted to learning and yet conspicuous in the public eye.

Richard of Bury (1287-1345) is now chiefly remembered because of his *Philobiblon*, one of the most interesting books in praise of books that has ever been written. He was a son of Sir Richard Aungerville, a knight whose ancestor had come over with the Conqueror. He gained distinction at Oxford; he was called to court to serve as tutor of the young prince, afterwards Edward III.; he occupied one after another many political positions, which required him to journey widely in England and abroad; he was the King's ambassador on more than one occasion, and travelled in magnificence; he secured the friendship of the Pope, and aroused the interest of Petrarch, with whom he conversed; he was appointed Bishop of Durham in 1333, and was enthroned later amid gorgeous scenes; in the same year he was chosen by the King Lord Treasurer and Chancellor of the realm; in 1335 he gave up this position to undertake important missions of diplomacy; his one memorable treatise was finished in 1345, only a few months before his death.

An old biography of Richard states that he had more books than all the other English bishops put together:

> He had a separate library in each of his residences, and wherever he was residing so many books lay about his bedchamber that it was hardly possible to stand or move without treading upon them. All the time he could spare from business was devoted either to religious offices or to his books. Every day while at table he would have a book read to him, unless some special guests were present, and afterwards would engage in discussion on the subject of the reading. The haughty Anthony Bec [Bishop of Durham before him] delighted in the appendages of royalty—to be addressed by nobles kneeling, and to be waited on in his presence-chamber at his table by knights bare-headed and standing; but De Bury loved to surround himself with learned men.

Richard included nearly every kind of book in his collection,

and procured rarities without consideration of cost, sometimes by unscrupulous means. He let it be known that his favour could be obtained more certainly by gifts of books than in any other way. He secured manuscripts from the monastic libraries by hook or by crook. He maintained copyists and illuminators of his own. He kept in communication with agents throughout Europe. Ever using all sorts of persons and magnets to attract books, he soon had "a multitudinous flight of the finest volumes."

The following passages from the *Philobiblon* will illustrate the author's feelings and style:

In books I find the dead as if they were alive; in books I foresee things to come; in books warlike affairs are set forth; from books come forth the laws of peace. All things are corrupted and decay in time; Saturn ceases not to devour the children that he generates; all the glory of the world would be buried in oblivion, unless God had provided mortals with the remedy of books.

The hideousness of vice is greatly reprobated in books, so that he who loves to commune with books is led to detest all manner of vice. . . . Faith is established by the power of books; hope is strengthened by their solace.

Books delight us when prosperity smiles upon us; they comfort us inseparably when stormy fortune frowns on us. They lend validity to human compacts, and no serious judgments are propounded without their help. Arts and sciences, all the advantages of which no mind can enumerate, consist in books. How highly must we estimate the wondrous power of books, since through them we survey the utmost bounds of the world and time, and contemplate the things that are as well as those that are not, as it were in the mirror of eternity.

Finally, we must consider what pleasantness of teaching there is in books, how easy, how secret! How safely we lay bare the poverty of human ignorance to books without feeling any shame! They are masters who instruct us without rod or ferule, without angry words, without clothes or money. If you come to them they are not asleep; if you ask and inquire of them they do not withdraw themselves; they do not chide if you make mistakes; they do not laugh at you if you are ignorant. O books, who alone are liberal and free, who give to all who ask of you and enfranchise all who serve you faithfully!

Richard laments the large number in his day who "offer the

fuming must of their youthful intellect to the difficulties of philosophy and bestow the clearer wine upon the money-making business of life." "Flocks and fleeces," he writes, "crops and granaries, leeks and potherbs, drink and goblets, are nowadays the reading and study of the monks, except a few elect ones, in whom lingers not the image, but some slight vestige of the fathers that preceded them." Of the mendicants he says that "a threefold case of superfluities, namely, of the stomach, of dress, and of houses," has seduced them from study. Paris Richard adored, but he found the scholars there "more zealous in the study of antiquity than in the subtle investigation of truth," while "English subtlety, illumined by the lights of former times, is always sending forth fresh rays of truth."

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries form the age of the schoolmen "doctors," the greatest of whom were differentiated by epithets characteristic of their distinction. Alexander of Hales was "irrefragable," Adam Marsh "illustrious," Roger Bacon "marvellous," Albertus Magnus "universal," Thomas Aquinas "angelic," Bonaventura "seraphic," Duns Scotus "subtle," William of Ockham "invincible," Bradwardine "profound," Burleigh "plain and perspicuous." It remains to speak of one more celebrated perhaps than any of these, the "evangelical" doctor—John Wycliffe.

Of Wycliffe (*c.* 1324-84), however, little need be said here, since his achievements will be considered more appropriately in the next volume of this work. Yet it is well to remark now that he was a philosopher and a theologian before he entered upon his career as a reformer and led the forces of heterodoxy and discontent with majestic power. And it was his training at Oxford, as fellow and master of Balliol, that fitted him later for that great public usefulness which established his renown. In philosophy he was a moderate realist, opposed to the intricacies of Continental Thomists; in theology, an iconoclast, defying ecclesiastical authority. He was the last prominent schoolman.

Wycliffe looms large on the horizon of our view as students

of English literature, not so much because of his philosophical, theological, or even political ideas, as because he took so enlightened an attitude towards the vernacular as to write many of his own tracts and sermons in English, and above all to produce our first English translation of the Bible.

An earlier contemporary of his, who likewise, because he too promoted the literary use of English, deserves fuller consideration at our hands than many a greater man of the same period, is the hermit Richard Rolle of Hampole. Rolle was born about 1290 at Thornton (Dale) in Yorkshire, and, with the aid of Thomas de Neville, Archdeacon of Durham, was enabled to study at Oxford. By nature, however, a mystic, the youth soon came to abhor the quibblings of theological speculation, and decided that in the controversies that raged at the University all was but vanity and vexation of spirit. Feeling stifled by the atmosphere of quintessential intellectuality that surrounded him, he decided to cut loose from his collegiate associates and flee to a solitary retreat, where, untrammelled by any responsibility or restriction, he might devote himself to attaining his lofty ideal of the contemplative life. He began his career somewhat sensationally. Borrowing from his sister two kirtles, one white, the other grey, he donned the white first and over it placed the grey without the sleeves, and then, finishing his attire with his father's hood, he escaped from home, frightening off his sister, who raised the cry that he was mad. Shortly after, he appeared at the church where a friend of his father's, John of Dalton, was wont to worship. By his singular behaviour and the zeal he evinced in a sermon which he preached unsolicited, he at once attracted the attention of the knight, who, being convinced of the sincerity of his purpose, provided him with a hermitage on his estate, and gave him daily sustenance. There, during some four years, he passed through the various stages of mystical purification, engaged chiefly with "love-longing and still mourning," conquering his natural self, struggling for the higher vision. Afterwards for a time he spent a restless life, wandering from one place to

another, "in holy thought and work." Having reached what he believed to be high altitudes of spiritual life, having come, according to his own feeling, to be numbered among the saints, he desired to lead others to the joy of divine ecstasy. Not being in orders, he could not preach in church; but he went about, eagerly spreading his new-found principle of love, admonishing the worldly-minded of awful danger in the future, pleading for chastity and charity. His wanderings, however, do not appear to have been satisfactory either to himself or to others, and he soon adopted a more efficacious way of advancing his theories of life: he began to write. Rhapsodic effusions, songs to Christ and Mary, had naturally been his first productions. These are now followed by longer works of pleading or denunciation. He writes easily, impetuously, constantly. He seeks to win souls by describing the joys of life in God; but also by placing before them fearful pictures of death and hell. He denounces the proud and selfish within and without the Church, and lashes hypocrites with a stinging thong. It is not surprising, then, considering the state of the clergy at the time, that he met with ridicule and supercilious neglect, that he found himself defamed and persecuted. For a while he suffered dejection. But serenity seems to have come to him when he settled in Richmondshire, near a nunnery of Ainderby, presided over by a recluse named Margaret, who inspired him to some of his best production. The last years of his life were spent at Hampole, in the south of Yorkshire, where he was the spiritual adviser of a body of Cistercian nuns. It was here supposedly that he wrote his most mature works, those which deal chiefly with the life to come; but the long English poem, *The Prick of Conscience*, is no longer ascribed to him. He died in 1349, probably one of the many victims of the pestilence of that year. By the nuns of Hampole he was regarded as a patron saint, and they prepared an *Officium et Legenda* of his life and miracles, in view of his expected canonisation. That this did not take place was perhaps due to the use made by the Lollards of his denunciatory works.

Amongst Rolle's early Latin writings is a *Melum Contemplativorum*, "Of the Glory and Perfection of the Saints," a series of postils in praise of the contemplative life—a book in combined prose and verse, characterised by the Anglo-Saxon tendency to balance and alliteration. This was followed by a *Regula Heremitarum* in prose; paraphrases of Job and other parts of Scripture; together with lyrics, epigrams, aphorisms, and sentences. His style is marked throughout by exuberance and extravagance. His passion is unrestrained, his zeal is immature. Two of his ethical works, *De Emendacione Vitae* and *De Incendio Amoris*, were englished in 1434-35 by one Richard Misyn, a Carmelite prior of Lincoln, and in this dress have recently been printed. The former is a "Rule of Living"; the latter a plea for piety and an exaltation of the hermit life. These works were offered "not to philosophers or to wise men of this world, or to great divines lapped in questions infinite, but to the ignorant and untaught, more busy to love God than to know many things." In Rolle's opinion, men burning with love seldom "go outward to worldly business, or take the dignity of worship or prelacy." "Alas! for shame," he exclaims, "an old wife is more expert of God's love and less desirous of worldly liking than is the great divine, whose study is vain; for why, for vanity he studies, that he glorious may appear, and so be known, that rents and dignities he more get: the which a fool, and not wise, is worthy to be holden." The love by which he is stimulated is "ghostly wine," under the influence of which he thus speaks with mystic emotion:

> It is said the nightingale to song and melody all night is given that she may please him to whom she is joined. How much more with greatest sweetness to Christ, my Jesu, I should sing, that is spouse of my soul, in all this present life, that is night in regard of clearness to come.

Langland denounced those who

> Clothed them in copes to be known from others,
> And made themselves hermits their ease to have;

but Rolle he certainly could not then have had in mind. Despite all his excesses, the hermit of Hampole seems to have been correctly described in the *Officium* as "a noble soul transported with the love of God."

Still another distinguished English writer of the fourteenth century, John Gower, was a Latin poet of deserved repute. Gower wrote in Latin verse a *Tripartite Chronicle*, concerning events of the reign of Richard II., and various short poems; but his chief work in the tongue of the learned was his *Vox Clamantis*, a poem of over 10,000 lines in elegiacs, after the manner of Ovid. The most interesting part of this composition, remarkable alike for its form and contents, deals with the Peasants' Rising of 1381; but it gives also a general view of social conditions in the author's time. That Gower should choose Latin for such a theme is a fact worth consideration. It shows the persistent belief of clerks in its superior dignity. Perhaps, furthermore, Gower felt it safer in a time of socialistic revolt to denounce abuses in a language not understood by the masses. Langland, we recall, makes his angel speak in Latin:

> For lewd (ignorant) men ne could
> Jangle nor judge, what justify them should,
> But suffer and serve.

There was but little Latin, as Chaucer points out, in the "maw" of the Shipman and his rough comrades.

The three great fourteenth-century poets of Italy, who are now celebrated particularly for their works in the vernacular, were formerly almost as much applauded for their books in the universal tongue of scholars. Dante wrote in Latin various eclogues and epistles, as well as his important treatises *De Monarchia* and *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. Moreover, he is said to have originally planned to write the *Divine Comedy* in Latin; and Boccaccio tells us that wise men of his time marvelled at his final choice of Italian. Petrarch wrote in Latin an epic poem on Scipio Africanus, and treatises On the Contempt of the World,

The Solitary Life, True Knowledge, etc. Boccaccio's four important Latin books, on mythology, ancient geography, and the history of famous men and women, were familiar to Chaucer and other English writers. One of his Latin eclogues inspired the production of *The Pearl*.

Latin long continued to be employed by scholars in England. The names of Capgrave and Fortescue; Erasmus, Grocyn, and Colet; Thomas More, Bale, Foxe, and Barclay; Francis Bacon and Milton—are alone sufficient to attest the hold that Latin maintained on cultivated men even to the end of the seventeenth century. It was with reluctance that Milton renounced Latin as the medium of his dignified thought. He did so, he informs us, because he recognised not only that it would be hard for him "to arrive at the second rank among the Latins," but also that it was a national duty for every one to strive to adorn the speech to which he was born—"*not caring to be once named abroad*," he adds, "but content with these British islands as my world." The words above italicised are very significant: it was chiefly because Englishmen cared to be named abroad, because they desired to be measured by world-standards, that they felt bound to write in Latin. And, indeed, until quite recently most foreigners, like Portia, have had "a poor pennyworth in the English." Fauconbridge, ignorant of Latin, French, and Italian, was, in truth, "a proper man's picture; but, alas, who can converse with a dumb show?" No European scholar in the Middle Ages would have been expected, even by an Englishman, to know English.

The influence of the widespread use of Latin in England during the period from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer is not to be estimated only by its direct, but also by its indirect effect on writing in the vernacular. Obviously, had the same men who wrote in Latin been able to be what they were, think as they thought, and do as they did, and still write in their native tongue, it would have been of great advantage to the nation. The history of our literature would have been a different sort of record. But quite as obviously that would not have been possible, for the

English authors were the product of the very cosmopolitan intellectual conditions which determined their attitude and style. Without yielding subservience to the power of the Latin Church, and profiting by the Latin schools, they would have been an isolated body of men, far less cultivated, with much narrower outlook, almost incapable of participating in the large movements of the world. It is indeed doubtful, then, whether in the long run our literature has suffered greatly because retarded in growth by this long-continued foreign dominion over English thought; for this dominion unquestionably established English civilisation on firmer foundations and made possible more permanent conditions of large national development. Less intimate with Continental learning, literature, and life, the English people might have produced more independent individuals, who would have left works of greater subjective interest than those which now bear witness to their power; but their increased isolation would have removed from them the outer stimuli that promoted their best achievement.

CHAPTER III

ANGLO-NORMAN AND ANGLO-FRENCH LITERATURE

FRENCH was spoken by many in England prior to the Conquest. Edward the Confessor, who was reared on the Continent, surrounded himself with Norman favourites, on whom he bestowed rich possessions. As a result, many foreigners made their abode in the land, and conducted themselves with entire disregard for the old habits of the people. This, however, was but a prelude to what happened after the arrival of William the Conqueror. French was then definitely established in England as the ordinary speech of nearly every one in authority who was naturally disposed to promote or to produce literary works.

It is well to remember that for over three hundred years after the Conquest no king of England spoke English as his mother-tongue; for Henry IV. (1399-1413) was perhaps the earliest to use it with native ease. One of the first acts of the Conqueror was to have the laws of his predecessors translated into French, in order to make them intelligible to those whose provisions they were to govern. And French remained the language of the courts up to 1362, when Edward III. finally acquiesced in the popular demand, and ordained that English should be used in pleadings. In 1362 for the first time the Chancellor opened Parliament with a speech in English. In 1386 English appeared in petitions; but not before 1450 were they regularly presented in that tongue. Law-suits were not conducted in English before the time of Henry III. The laws themselves were formulated in French or in

Latin to the end of the fifteenth century. Cromwell did away with French in the courts; but it was restored by Charles; and only since the eighteenth century has the use of English been obligatory. Even to this day a large number of French phrases are in common use by jurists, perpetual reminders of the foundations of English law.

For a time after the arrival of the Normans there was naturally a gulf fixed between the classes who spoke French and those who spoke English; but the chasm was speedily bridged. By intermarriage, by intermingling of every kind, but, above all, by the rapidly developed sense of patriotic unity, the barriers of race ceased to exist, and both English and French were spoken or understood by all men of influence. The Conqueror seems never to have desired to uproot the popular speech, and in this he was wise: the sentiment of independent nationality was too strong to permit it if he had tried. Every king of England was brought to see that his power lay in his subjects' devotion, and that he alienated their sympathies by disturbing their traditions. They were not troubled by his use of French, because it was natural to him; they tolerated the French of his prelates and subordinates because to them too it was natural, and many such they recognised as serving the best interests of the land. These might speak French or not as they pleased, so long as their feelings were English, and they suffered no reproach. But the cause of England gradually came to require insistence on English as the national tongue; hostility to the French established mutual sympathy at home; and when England for Englishmen became the watchword of all ranks, the use of the ancient language of the people was accepted as the touchstone of a patriot.

It is important, then, to distinguish two periods in the supremacy of French in England. From the Conquest to the loss of Normandy in 1204, the relations existing between the Normans or French of the island and of the Continent necessitated the preservation of the only language intelligible to both. But when, by agreement of John and Philip Augustus, no knight

was allowed to hold lands in both England and Normandy, when Normans had to be formally as well as practically naturalised in England, French became a foreign tongue. It continued to be much cultivated, but not in the same spirit as before. It was learned for convenience in travel, for use in handling documents and state papers, for the amenities of social intercourse, and the satisfactions of polite literature.

In the thirteenth century Grosseteste still recognised as available for the cultivated only two languages, Latin in learning and French in society. Then, not only the aristocracy but also the middle classes, who aped them, strove to acquire some knowledge of the foreign speech as a mark of distinction, as an accomplishment. "For but a man knows French, he is esteemed but little," said the sturdy Englishman Robert of Gloucester. And Higden, Chaucer's contemporary, declared that even in his time "uplandish men" would liken themselves to gentlemen by busy efforts to speak French. Gentlemen's children, he explained, were taught French from their cradles. All the instruction in grammar schools, moreover, was given in French until 1349, when one John Cornwall made what was no doubt a startling innovation and adopted English instead. Concerning the wisdom of the change, John of Trevisa, Higden's translator, wrote thus in 1385 :

> The advantage is that they learn their grammar in less time than children were wont to do ; the disadvantage, that now children of the grammar schools know no more French than their left heels, and that is harm for them, if they shall pass the sea and travel in strange lands and in many other places. Also gentlemen have now much left for to teach their children French.

At the universities the old custom of construing in the foreign tongue was longer maintained. Students at Oxford as late as 1340 were required to speak Latin or French at their meals.

At first as pure French was spoken in England as on the Continent. In the *Ypomedon* of Hugh of Rutland (*c.* 1185), for example, no peculiar Anglicisms are to be found. But as

time went on the language grew more and more provincial. The English who received their schooling at home were not so facile or correct with tongue or pen as their kinsmen in France. Such schools as those at Marlborough and Stratford-atte-Bowe (to which Walter Map and Chaucer refer) were nc places to learn exactly Continental French. Even so accomplished a writer as Gower apologised for his awkward use of the foreign idiom, on the ground of his nationality. But it should be remembered that large numbers of English youth were constantly being educated at Paris, and these, as well as the knights and clergy, who habitually travelled, must be presumed to have spoken nearly like their friends abroad.

The persistent use of French in England had large effect on the national tongue. It made for the obscuration of final syllables and the loss of inflections. It influenced the order of words, accentuated the differences between the dialects, and favoured the analytical tendency of the language. Gradually the French element became more and more noticeable in the vocabulary. It is estimated that in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* from 1086 to 1154 there are less than twenty French words; in Layamon's *Brut* (*c.* 1205) hardly a hundred appear in 32,000 lines; in Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle (1298) there are as many in the first five hundred; while Robert Mannyng of Brunne (1303) has a hundred and seventy in an equal number. And the French intermixture is marked not only in such works as the above, which are based on French poems, but in alliterative writings of the fourteenth century: for example, *The Pearl*, which has no such connection. On the other hand, the French of Englishmen showed the influence of native syntax and vocabulary. In their French poems we observe the employment of Germanic principles of metre.

The French literature produced in England during the early Middle Ages is certainly of large importance in estimating the intellectual activity of Englishmen during that period; but it ceased to have special significance when it was not naturally

employed. We are but mildly interested in the misdirected efforts of the few who affectedly or stupidly persisted in the use of a tongue not their own. Yet the bias of prevailing taste in the fourteenth century and later towards French styles is a fact of moment in any consideration of the influences under which Chaucer and his fellows developed their art.

Old French literature comprises two great divisions, narrative and didactic, which are further subdivided for clear treatment. The first includes epics, romances, and tales; the second, historical, religious, ethical, and utilitarian works. More or less apart stand lyrical poems and the drama. It is the purpose of the present chapter to indicate briefly the productions of the Normans and Anglo-French in these different styles. Some of the documents here only named will be more fully discussed in later sections.

Romance

The Continental Normans were not a romantic people. Notwithstanding the frequent statements to the contrary, the fact is incontrovertible that they had little share in the production of the romances of war and adventure which occupy so large a place in Old French literature. They were undoubtedly familiar with them, read them with pleasure, and helped in their distribution; but they were apparently too sober and serious-minded to give themselves up to such unpractical composition. The Anglo-Normans, however, seem to have cultivated romance with more zest: through their efforts has been preserved much ancient saga of the British Isles of which otherwise we should have no trace. The conditions of their settlement seem to have brought this about. Finding themselves in daily intercourse with fellow-countrymen of unlike ancestry, they naturally questioned them with regard to their past history, and listened with attention to the tales of old

heroes held in honourable memory by their descendants—tales which made the land of their adoption more interesting and worthy. Becoming speedily naturalised, the Normans adopted as their own the traditions of Britain, of no matter whose inheritance, and thereby developed bonds of sympathy with the composite people whom but a short time since they had dispossessed of power. Men and women of station encouraged writers to record the old stories in French, that they might be made accessible to the world, and that they themselves might read them with greater pleasure.

Unquestionably Anglo-Normans played an important part in perpetuating the so-called "matter of Britain." Leaving aside for the moment the translations by Gaimar, Wace, and others of the epoch-making history of Geoffrey of Monmouth, which first dignified the Celtic tales of Arthur and his followers, we observe, first, that the oldest Breton lay (of the enchanted horn which caused much merriment and dismay at Arthur's court) was composed by an Anglo-Norman, Robert Biquet, and that the most distinguished of all lay-writers, the charming poetess Marie de France, collected and redacted her material in England, and dedicated the finished volume to Henry II. Unfortunately we have but fragments of the *Tristan* of her contemporary, Thomas, but still enough is left to convince us that it was an excellent poem, one of the best of all mediæval romances, and the work of an Englishman. If the Bréri to whom Thomas refers as an authority on "les gestes et les cuntes, De tuz les reis, de tuz les cuntes Qui orent esté en Bretaigne" (*i.e.* Great Britain) is identical with the Welsh "famosus fabulator" Bledhericus, spoken of by Gerald de Barri, and also with Bleheris, the writer of the source of Wauchier de Denain's continuation of Crestien's *Perceval*, he probably wrote, a half century before Crestien, poems in French concerning Gawain and other British heroes. In England before 1200 was composed *La Folie Tristan*, an interesting episodic poem of about a thousand lines. Robert de Boron, to whom we owe

much in the development of the legend of the Holy Grail, has been identified with "a landed knight of Hertfordshire, who in an undated document of 1177-1203, with his wife Beatrice and his son Roger, presented lands at Cockenhatch to a cloister, and about 1186 received rewards from Henry II." And these, we may be sure, are but a few of those who were occupied in England in reviving the popular lore of the Celts. Were we in possession of all the facts, had we in our hands the poems irrevocably gone, we should certainly have many more names to enrol in this honourable list.

There are those who would still deprive the Normans of much participation in propagating the "matter of Britain"; but none can deny them the credit of making considerable English tradition accessible to the world: the extant French romances of *Horn et Rimenhild*, *Havelok*, *Waldef*, *Guy de Warwick*, and *Boeve de Hamtone* are the work of Normans in England.

They also helped to perpetuate other themes. About 1185 an Anglo-Norman, Hugh of Rutland, who lived at Credenhill, near Hereford, and was an acquaintance of Walter Map, compiled his *Ypomedon* and *Protesilaus*, which recall the Romance of Thebes in name, yet seem Arthurian in style. The famous love-story of *Amadas et Ydoine* (which, like Crestien's *Cligès*, reminds one of the tale of *Romeo and Juliet*) existed in an Anglo-Norman redaction, to which (or to an English translation of it) Gower and other poets refer. About the middle of the thirteenth century a clerk, Eustace of Kent, wrote of Alexander in a *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*. The life of Richard Cœur de Lion and that of the outlaw Fulk FitzWarren were romantically recorded in Anglo-French.

Many scribes, moreover, were kept busy in England copying the popular romances composed on the Continent, and their manuscripts are still in notable instances the best, sometimes the only ones, preserved. Crestien (de Troyes?) says he derived the material for his *Guillaume d'Angleterre* from England. The Italian Rustician of Pisa made his extensive book of Arthurian

romance on the basis of a manuscript belonging to Edward, son of Henry III. By way of England French romances were transmitted to the North.

Tales

Of the short secular tales current among the Anglo-Norman laity we have but scant knowledge. Fabliaux no doubt circulated freely in England; but only seven extant poems of this kind appear to have been composed there. In the composition of the beast-epic of Reynard the Fox they perhaps participated. Marie's *Ysopet* attests their acquaintance with a large body of Æsopic fable, which was made familiar to them likewise by sermons and example-books. *Contes dévots* were very much to the Norman taste, and large numbers were written in French for the people. We have a collection of Miracles of Our Lady by an Anglo-Norman monk Adgar of the twelfth century. A collection of stories, as well as a book of edification, is the *Manuel des Pechiés* of William of Wadington, which, as we shall see, was translated into English by Robert of Brunne in 1303. In the thirteenth century the Anglo-Norman Chardri wrote his *Barlaam et Josaphaz*, a metrical version of a collection of tales with an extraordinary history: at bottom an account of Buddha, turned into a Christian Greek legend in the sixth or seventh century, it was accessible to the writer in a Latin redaction of the tenth. Barlaam, a holy hermit, converts the young Indian prince Josaphaz to Christianity by skilful instruction, of which the narration of various Oriental stories, ingeniously pointed, forms the chief substance. Many tales were moralised for the middle classes, who preferred French to English, by Nicole Bozon, an industrious populariser of clerical learning at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and a story-teller sometimes of considerable skill.

Historical Works

The most important, however, of the literary productions of the Anglo-Normans in the vernacular are their records of historical events. On the Continent little had been done to provide the people with information regarding their past; but in England the laity evinced so early an ardent desire for knowledge of former and present happenings, and powerful patrons were so ready to encourage writers, that many important works were speedily produced. Doubtless the fact that French appeared more dignified in England than abroad had something to do with the stimulus given there to compositions in that language. But there was a deeper cause. Even before the Conquest, the Normans had no particular love for the French; and when they once had gained the supremacy in England, they soon developed a spirit of haughty independence exasperating to their nominal lords. In an effort to magnify the importance of their position, they seized upon the native traditions of their new land and utilised them as theirs. The French taunted them about their allegiance to "Arflet of Northumberland" (a fictitious personage, with his name from King Alfred), but particularly about their parade of Arthur, whom the conquerors took pains to exalt as a national hero. When their jealous rivals tried to lower this royal figure in their eyes, picturing him as one who had been overcome by a cat (Chapalu), which had afterwards invaded England and carried off the king's crown, they retorted with indignant sneers (as we see from André de Coutances) that this was but a miserable and lying concoction, that in truth Arthur had victoriously subjugated the whole realm of France, and held proud court at Paris itself. Appealing to Geoffrey of Monmouth as authority, they reminded the French of the defeat of their king Frollo in the Île de France, and portrayed this supposed ruler as a contemptible person who in making his testament had left them certain despicable rules of conduct, which had since become their prominent characteristics.

Geoffrey's history, in truth, had much to do with making the Normans proud of their adopted land. Though denounced, as we have seen, by a critical few as a mere tissue of fables, it was widely believed, and read with rejoicing. Geoffrey's work spread like a popular novel to-day. It speedily became everywhere a subject of discussion. Soon after its appearance Alvred of Beverley tells us that he grew so uncomfortable at being obliged time and time again to say that he had not read it, that he finally secured a copy. Then, however, he was so delighted that he at once made an abstract of it for his own convenience. Collecting facts from other sources, he afterwards continued it to 1129. His example in this regard was followed by others: it became a common thing to bring Geoffrey up to date. Before 1150 it was translated into French verse by the Anglo-Norman Geoffrey Gaimar, at the instance of Constance, wife of Ralph FitzGilbert, a noble lady of Lincolnshire. In this, the first French rhymed chronicle extant, the author followed the fortunes of the island from the era preceding the Trojan War, through the period of the Roman administration, the epochs of British and Saxon rule, down to the Conquest, tracing afterwards, all too briefly, the succeeding events to the death of William II. The first part of this extensive work, the *Estorie des Bretons*, has disappeared, probably because eclipsed by that of Wace, which covered the same ground better almost immediately after (about 1155); but we have still the *Estorie des Engleis*, a work of considerable historical interest, though not so valuable as if the author had dealt with matters of which as a contemporary he might be presumed to have first-hand knowledge. It is valuable also because it embodies tales of romantic heroes such as Havelok and Hereward, and legends of English saints. Geoffrey's history Gaimar obtained, he tells us, through the efforts of his patroness and her husband, from Walter Espec, a well-known Yorkshire baron (†1153), who distinguished himself particularly at the Battle of the Standard in 1138, and was the founder of several abbeys (Kirkham, Rievaulx, and Wardon).

He also used as sources other "English, Romance, and Latin books," some of which are difficult to identify, but among them the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* certainly occupied a conspicuous place.

Though closely attached to the English rulers and a mocking reviler of the French, Wace seems to have lived most of his life in Normandy. Born about 1100 in Jersey, he left his home at an early age to study, first at Caen, afterwards at Paris; then he returned to Caen, and lived there many years; until finally, as a reward for his literary labours, he was made prebendary of Bayeux. He died probably about 1175. He himself tells us that he occupied the position of "reading clerk" during the lives of the first three Henries, all of whom he had seen and known; and that he had composed many works other than his histories, of which some saints' lives are preserved. He was, it appears, an author by profession, who wrote more for calculated profit than from inevitable inspiration. And yet he was by no means servile or dependent in his attitude. He controlled his chief authorities by personal investigations, and utilised information from whatever source it might be derived, whether held in memory from the songs of jongleurs whom he had heard in his youth, or taken from the storehouse of popular tradition to which he had access. To Geoffrey's matter he added occasionally, as, for example, details regarding the Welsh bard Taliessin, the story of how Gormond set fire to Cirencester, the legend of how the inhabitants of Dorset got tails according to the prayer of St. Augustine, whom they irreverently mocked; also certain important statements concerning the foundation of the Round Table. Parts of Geoffrey's book (such as the prophecies of Merlin) he omitted as unintelligible or irrelevant. But his chief change was in the tone of the work. With no little skill he turned the rhetorical Latin prose of his original into flowing octosyllabic couplets, and subtly transformed it by the infusion of the spirit of French romance. In his hands the narrative gained in vividness and realism. Each battle he described as if an eye-

witness of the scene. Imagining, for example, Arthur's fleet setting sail to engage in war with Rome, he conceived sailors in the rigging, warriors bidding farewell to their friends, leaders delivering orders to the crew, and painted a picture full of animation and life.

It was at the command of Henry II. that Wace undertook later (between 1160 and 1174) to write the history of the Dukes of Normandy, usually termed the *Roman de Rou*, after Rollo (Hrólfr), the first chieftain of the Norman line, to whom Charles the Simple had given Neustria in fief in 911. Using as his chief authorities the chronicles of Dudo of St. Quentin, William of Jumièges, and William of Poitiers, he compiled a work of historical as well as literary and linguistic value. He added to information in his sources many a bit of his own gleaning. Wace did not get beyond the Battle of Tinchebrai in 1106. For some unknown reason he lost the favour of his patron, who commissioned another to write the history of the duchy.

Benoît was the name of the rival who supplanted him as royal historiographer. He also left the work incomplete. Although his *Chronique des Ducs de Normandie* is 42,300 lines long, it reaches only to the death of Henry I.; yet the author's chief object, we are told, was to describe the reign of Henry II. He utilised Wace as well as his predecessors, but followed his own judgment or caprice, now adding, now subtracting, yet without making any very significant change. This Benoît has in the past been regularly identified with the well-known author of the *Roman de Troie*, Benoît de Ste. More ; but the identification is now questioned. His work is characterised by the same detailed descriptions as Wace's, the same tendency to elaborate and add graphic touches. Benoît's style, however, is less concise, less clear-cut, without any trace of the amused irony in which now and then his rival indulged.

In this connection should be mentioned, though not composed until the beginning of the fourteenth century, another Anglo-French chronicle, similar in nature and substance to

Gaimar's, by a fellow-Northerner, Pers de Langtoft, Canon of the Augustinian priory at Bridlington in Yorkshire. The first part of his work is an abridgment of Geoffrey of Monmouth, with a few variations which seem to show acquaintance with other British legends then current. The second embraces a history of the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman kings down to the death of Henry III. Here he compiles, not always accurately, from various writers, amongst whom he mentions William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, and Florence of Worcester. In the third section, to the death of Edward I., Langtoft is a contemporary historian, and his record has independent value. Noteworthy is his hatred of the Scotch. Though really of small literary merit, and written in barbarous French, his work seems to have been very popular. It was often copied, and formed the basis for a large part of the English chronicle of Robert of Brunne. It is composed in rhymed Alexandrine tirades, though songs in other metres are occasionally introduced.

But historical writing among the Normans was not confined to comprehensive chronicles. Gaimar, in concluding his work, declares his intention of writing a history of the life of Henry I., as a supplement to that of a contemporary named David, whom he reproaches with having omitted "thousands of things" of interest. He seems particularly to have missed some account of the romantic episodes in the King's career, and descriptions of hunts and courtly feasts. Yet David's poem, we learn, was written in the style of the *chansons de geste*, and was suited for song. This book the Lady Constance had had transcribed at the cost of a mark of silver and kept by her in her chamber. Originally it had been composed at the request of Adelaide of Louvain, after the death of her husband, Henry I., in 1135. Its disappearance, like that of Gaimar's own work (including his proposed Life of Henry, if it ever was written), is but one of many bits of evidence that we can never hope to estimate accurately the literary productivity of the period.

Several important events in the reign of Henry II. were recorded in verse by contemporaries. The murder of Thomas à Becket in 1170, which made so great a sensation throughout Europe, and for which the King had so to humble himself, called forth several lives of the Saint in the vulgar tongue, the most significant (in five-line strophes, monorhymes) being by Garnier du Pont St. Maxence, a Frenchman, who, however, journeyed to England for information, and finished his book in 1174 at Thomas's grave in Canterbury. Another (in tail-rhyme strophes) was written before the end of the century by an Anglo-Norman, Benoît, a monk of St. Albans. A third (in octosyllabic couplets), of the beginning of the thirteenth century, is preserved only in fragments. Of these, Garnier's work is distinctly the most remarkable. The author prided himself on the purity and distinction of his style, his language being, as he was well aware, superior to Norman-French. His information, being gathered from authoritative sources, may be accepted as essentially exact, and his bold presentation as a fairly true picture of the dangerous situation of the Church at the time.

On the same day (July 13, 1174) that Henry publicly expiated his share in Becket's murder, his Scottish opponent, William the Lion, was defeated and taken prisoner near Alnwick. At Henry's command, a clerk named Jordan Fantosme had accompanied the army as a reporter to take note of the events, and shortly afterwards he wrote these down in lively narrative. His poem contains only about 2000 long lines, rhyming in clusters. Fantosme was a man of sound learning, a pupil of the celebrated Gilbert de la Porrée at Paris, and "spiritual chancellor" of the diocese of Winchester.

Henry's conquest of Ireland in 1172 also occasioned an Anglo-Norman poem before the end of the century. It was written by an anonymous author, who profited by information received from Morice Regan, interpreter of the Irish King Dermod, accessible to him apparently in a written record of the events, possibly in metrical form. This work does not carry the history

regularly beyond 1176, but was probably not completed before 1225. The author seems to have written independently of Giraldus Cambrensis, and though his book is incomplete, ill-preserved in a unique manuscript, and of no great literary merit, it is important for the information it contains.

In France the best historical writing of the mediæval period was stimulated by the Crusades. The admirable work of Villehardouin on the Conquest of Constantinople dealt with the events of the fourth Crusade, from 1198 to 1207. Later the lovable Joinville wrote in his peculiarly charming way of the sixth Crusade, in which his almost equally lovable but more austere master, St. Louis, figured so prominently. And other important accounts of expeditions to the East witness to the eagerness of the French public to hear of the marvellous efforts of their compatriots to deliver the Holy City. One of the earliest of all (nearly 11,000 lines) deals with the third Crusade, in which Richard of England played the leading part. It was written by one of his followers, probably a jongleur, called Ambrose, and is entitled the *Histoire de la Guerre Sainte.* The author always pictures the struggle from Richard's point of view, and his work deserves mention here not only on that account, but because it was almost immediately put into Latin (the *Itinerarium Regis Richardi*) by a prior of the Church of the Holy Trinity at London, named Richard. This work, genuinely historical, contrasts strangely with the fabulous account of the Lionhearted as given in the metrical romance already mentioned, of which the French original, written after 1230, is now lost.

Of all the Anglo-Norman historiograpical poems, one of the most interesting and valuable is one of the latest, namely, the Life of William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, Regent of England during Henry III.'s minority, who died in 1219 at the age of eighty. Inasmuch as this admirable man so long occupied a conspicuous position among the nobles of England, a detailed account of his life (over 19,000 lines), based on trustworthy

contemporary information, is of extreme value to the historian of the social and political life of the period. A favourite of monarchs, a leader in important wars, a wise administrator under the most difficult circumstances, a public personage of great distinction, his life was of unusual interest, and fortunately it was worthily told. The poem was composed about 1226 at the request of the Earl's eldest son, mainly from material furnished the author by John of Early (Berkshire), Marshal's friend and comrade. The poet's language shows him to have been a native of France, though the unique manuscript of the work is that of an English scribe. He was probably a writer by profession, perhaps a tourney herald, whose duties had by that time so widened as to include the production of literary works, and whose life of travel and constant association with people of prominence were helpful in their preparation. It may be noted in passing that such lives as these are trustworthy records. It is a common misapprehension, inherited from the Middle Ages, that Latin histories are more reliable than those in the vulgar tongue. The air of learned dignity that the former possess often leads the reader to over-estimate, while the simple colloquialism of the latter as frequently leads him to under-estimate, a document's worth.

Similarly, a life of the Black Prince was written in French verse about 1386 by the army herald of Sir John Chandos, Constable of Aquitaine. The author probably witnessed with his own eyes many of the events that he narrates.

After the thirteenth century there was little historical writing in Anglo-French. Apart from Langtoft, already referred to, but one other chronicler need be mentioned, namely, Nicholas Trivet (Trevet), whose work is familiar to English scholars as the source of the story of Constance in Chaucer and Gower. Trivet was born in Norwich, the son of an itinerant justice. He studied at Oxford and Paris, and is said to have later become a Dominican prior at London. He was a man of wide repute for his learning and cultivation, well read in classical as well as

in theological literature, and expressed himself with clearness and ease. Many of his works are not yet published. The French chronicle that here particularly concerns us was written for the use of the Princess Mary, daughter of Edward I., who became a nun of Amesbury in 1285.

Important not for their literary value, but because of their malign influence in spreading untrustworthy historical information throughout England, are the numerous French compositions known as *Brutes*, written mostly in the early part of the fourteenth century. Some are very brief, consisting of little more than a catalogue of the kings of the island, with their chief exploits. Others are largely abridgments of Geoffrey. The most popular sort, however, not only included much of Geoffrey freely handled, but later, even recent, events. One of these, translated into English, was printed by Caxton in 1480, under the heading of *The Cronycles of England*, and long remained a standard authority. Similar in foundation is the French *Scalacronica* of Sir Thomas Gray of Heton, put together by that undaunted warrior after 1355, when he was imprisoned at Edinburgh.

Finally, it should be observed that English kings, even in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, seem to have preferred French to native chronicles of their doings. Froissart we shall not discuss here. But it is in place to note how, exactly a century after Sir Thomas Gray, in 1455, Sir Jehan de Waurin prepared a *Recueil*, or Complete History of Great Britain, though it is too prolix and full of absurdities to demand further attention. French chronicles of London from 1259 to 1343 are also preserved.

Political Poems and Satires

Numerous political songs were written in French in England after the loss of Normandy. A *Song of the Church* (1256) denounces the taxes that, with the consent of the Pope,

Henry III. levied on the clergy in his vain attempt to secure for one of his sons the throne of Sicily. Another (*c.* 1263) enumerates with praise many barons opposed to the King, among them the chivalrous Simon de Montfort, a lament for whose death appeared shortly after the battle of Evesham. During the reign of Edward I. dissatisfaction with the times was voiced in a French ballad; but regret at Edward's loss was soon after expressed by another poet apprehensive of the future. The notorious vices of the monks were keenly satirised in an amusing piece, *L'Ordre de Bel Aise*, which advanced the claims of a new order emphasising the characteristic sins of all the others. Sometimes French and Latin were blended in macaronic verse. A *Song on the Tailors*, thus constructed, denounces the extravagance in dress of Henry III.'s time; another, the taxes levied by Edward I. for the Flemish War. Latin, French, and English, all three appear in a song on the times of Edward II.

Satire flourished among the Normans as among the Norse and Provençal. Even kings were not exempt from sneers, and had to safeguard their reputations by treating generously those in a position to do them harm. For poets did not wait for a grievance to grow cold, but struck while the iron was hot and with bold courage. Sometimes they suffered sadly in consequence. Ordericus tells us that Henry I. submitted a knight, Luc de la Barre, to fierce punishment for having composed *estrabots* holding the prince up to ridicule: in 1124 he condemned him to lose his eyes; but rather than submit to such torture, the unfortunate man dashed his head against his prison wall.

From the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries we have many Anglo-French satirical poems, which concerned themselves more with the exposure of social than political abuses: *dits*, debates, parodies, reveries, and the like, the work usually of vagabond clerks. Often women were treated with cynical scorn: all possible ill qualities were attributed to them, and married life was painted dark. It is noteworthy, however, that in England

the sex did not lack defenders. One writer on *La Bonté des Femmes* even tried to prove that Adam was more guilty than Eve. He calls down melancholy and mischief, "anguish within and without," on all traducers of women, and certainly, if his prayers were heard, many were afflicted. The French, it may finally be said, indulged in mockery of the English (cf. *La Paix aux Anglais*, *La Charte aux Anglais*), getting particular amusement from the way their rivals spoke their common tongue. The English retorted rather more heavily, sneering at the French for their meanness, stinginess, lechery, and lack of honour. The wars between the two nations gave rise to poems vaunting one side at the other's expense. The *Vows of the Heron* (1338) was written by a partisan of Robert of Artois, to show his master's part in provoking the English monarch to war with France.

Religious Works

From the beginning of the twelfth century the Bible was made accessible in parts or as a whole to the Anglo-Normans in their own tongue. The two oldest French versions of the Psalms were then executed in England, one by an Edwin, who was probably a monk of Canterbury. Due also to islanders are two poetical paraphrases of the Bible, in decasyllabic couplets or monorhymes. In Stephen's time, Samson de Nanteuil produced for an English lady, Adelaide of Condé (mistress of Horncastle in Lincolnshire), a version of the Proverbs of Solomon, in short rhymed couplets, accompanied by an interesting commentary in the same metre. An excellent prose version of the Books of Samuel and Kings is preserved in a manuscript written in England not long after. An Anglo-French translation of the Apocalypse of St. John is dated at the beginning of the thirteenth century. About 1250 Robert of Gretham (the author likewise of a large theological work, the *Corset*) versified in his *Miroir* those parts of the Gospels used in the Sunday service, and

added to them a long commentary. Robert was the chaplain, it appears, of a Lord Alein and a Lady Aline, neither of whom could read Latin. The former, quite properly, liked theology; but the latter had a frivolous taste for *chansons de geste*. It was to provide her with better reading that the author composed the *Miroir*. He mentioned his own name in connection with it solely to ask for readers' prayers on his behalf. In the latter half of the same century were written in French two metrical versions of the Gospel of Nicodemus and other apocryphal matter, such as the legends of the Holy Rood. Verse, moreover, was extensively used for homiletic and theological purposes. Apart from short treatises on the Seven Deadly Sins, the Pains of Hell, the Signs of Judgment, and such dismal themes, we find paraphrases of the Creed, Ave Maria, and the like—dull certainly, and useful only in presenting the precepts of the Church in short compass suitable for recitation or chant.

Legends and Lives of Saints

The Normans seem to have been particularly fond of religious narratives: they were preëminent in the early production of legends and saints' lives. Their choice of subject was apparently dictated at first by motives of national concern. Wace, for example, wrote the Life of St. Nicholas because of its peculiar interest to his fellow-countrymen. St. Nicholas was a friend of mariners, and on this account appealed to a nation of sea-faring folk; in 1087, moreover, his bones had been recovered by a company of Normans in Lycia and taken by them to southern Italy—an exploit the fame of which still echoed throughout Normandy. Similarly, Wace wrote of the Conception of Mary, because the feast in memory of that event was first celebrated by William the Conqueror in the Abbey of Ramsey. According to St. Anselm, this was due to the interposition of the Virgin in favour of Norman sailors about to perish in a storm.

To us it is significant that the Anglo-Normans speedily

adopted the old Celtic saints, and took pains to record their lives. Thus was perpetuated the very interesting tale of the voyage of St. Brendan, an ancient Celtic *imram*, or Odyssey, of the visit of a heathen hero to the Isles of the Blest, transformed into the journey of a Christian saint to paradise. This poem was written about 1125, on the basis of a Latin prose version by an ecclesiastic named Benedict, at the request of Queen Adelaide. Later, in the thirteenth century, it was redacted more than once on the Continent. At the end of the twelfth century and in the first half of that following, appeared Anglo-Norman Lives of the fifth-century Irish saint Modwenna, and the first British martyr St. Alban, who perished under Diocletian, with his friend Amphibal.

In French was also perpetuated some of the hagiography of England. The Life of St. Edmund, the East-Anglian king who fell in 870 in strife with the Danes, was recounted by Denis Pyramus as a work of pious devotion in his old age. Before 1245 a monk of Westminster composed for Eleanor of Provence a long poem on Edward the Confessor. The Lives of Becket have previously been discussed as being of more historical than purely hagiographical interest. Here, however, may be mentioned the poems commemorating the supposed murder of the child Hugh of Lincoln in 1255 by Jews desirous of showing their contempt of Christ—an event to which Chaucer refers in his tale of the Prioress, of similar origin. Such works as these did much to arouse the popular indignation against the Jews, in large measure unjustified, which led to their expulsion in 1290.

An English nun, Clemence of Barking (near London), wrote in the twelfth century a Life of St. Catherine; not long after, an English canon, Guillaume de Berneville, one of St. Giles; about 1200 Simon de Fresne, a friend of Giraldus Cambrensis, retold the story of St. George; before 1216 Chardri, the author of the poem on Barlaam and Josaphaz, popularised the legend of the *Sept Dormants*, the seven youths of Ephesus, who, having hidden in a cave for fear of Decius, awoke after two hundred

years and lived long enough to confirm the miracle; in 1212-14, one Angier, a sub-deacon of St. Frideswide's, Oxford, translated faithfully into French verse the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, and added a Life of Gregory.

Many other French lives of saints were written later in England. They have, however, little significance for us except as indicating that the taste for this form of literature was abiding, and that fashion dictated their continuous writing in the language of the refined.

Didactic Works

The chief characteristic of Anglo-Norman literature, taken as a whole, is its popular utilitarian and pious purpose. All sorts of treatises of instruction and edification appear, therefore, in abundance; but, being mostly translations or dull compilations, their interest is small. So greatly, however, did they occupy the thoughts of mediæval readers that they assume an importance in our eyes which is unjustified by their inherent merit.

The oldest bit of Anglo-Norman verse extant is a *Comput*, or explanation of the calendar, prepared *c.* 1113 by one Philippe de Thaün, a London clerk, who also wrote for Queen Adelaide, *c.* 1125, a *Bestiaire*, the first treatise of the kind in French, describing the nature and "signification" of various animals. Lapidaries, discussing the medical properties of precious stones, or the allegorical meanings of the twelve of special scriptural significance, and other books of pseudo-science and the properties of things, also became widely current. Three Anglo-Norman versions of the *Disticha Catonis* are extant, as well as sundry treatises on manners, books of medicine, courtesy, civility, falconry, chess, etc. Grammatical and orthographic manuals for use in learning French were prepared in England much earlier than in France. Noteworthy is one written about 1300 by a knight Walter (Gautier) of Bibbysworth, for a noble lady, Denise de Monchensi—verse being here employed, as so constantly elsewhere when it was ill suited. In the thirteenth century and

later appeared numerous compends for instruction, some of them enormous in extent (*e.g. La Lumière as Lais* of Peter of Peckham, the *Secret des Secrets*, *Image du Monde*, *Petite Philosophie*, etc.). An Anglo-French version exists of the *Book of Sidrac the Philosopher, called the Book of the Fount of Knowledge.*

Lyrics and Debates

Every encouragement, it has already been pointed out, was given in mediæval England to the production of lyric love-poetry in the style cultivated with so much success in the south of France, but with much smaller results than one would expect. We have, indeed, some relics of the thirteenth century, an allegorical "complaint" in tercets of six syllables and a suite of seven love-songs, which may be merely illustrative of much erotic verse that has disappeared, or is not yet published. But it is likely that the Anglo-French, being, it would seem, less light-hearted and facile than the Provençal or the French of the Continent, did not yield themselves so readily to such composition. When they felt the influence of lyric devotion, which "courtly" songs persuasively instilled, they spent their emotions less on worldly love: in their passion they turned to the Holy Virgin, whom they endowed with all bodily grace and beauty of form, and offered themselves as her faithful servitors with the rapture of religious joy. Thus most permanently did the spirit of Provençal poetry manifest itself in England. Nowhere was the cult of the Virgin more developed: in her honour numerous poems were composed. We read in verse of her "Five Joys," of her "Complaint," of the events of her life, her assumption to heaven, and many wonderful, and some very tender, miracles performed by her power. Here we have pure lyrics, or lyrical narratives, betokening a fervid zeal and exalted mysticism. Songs on Jesus, the Saviour-Knight, reveal the same feudal spirit.

This spirit appears likewise in a charming allegorical poem attributed to Bishop Grosseteste, the *Château d'Amour.*

The Castle of Love was the fairest ever created. It was established on a firm rock, and without was of three colours—never-fading green at the bottom, beautiful blue above, and rose-red at the top. Within, it was shining white. In the high tower was a throne of white ivory, and a well from which flowed healing streams to the people outside. There were four small towers, three bailies, and seven barbicans. This castle was the body of the sweet maiden Mary. It relied on the strength of her heart. The colours of its exterior betokened her belief, her fair humility, her glowing love. In the high tower, from which flowed streams of grace, sat God enthroned. The small towers represented the four cardinal virtues; the bailies her maidenhood, chastity, and holy espousal; the barbicans the opponents of the seven deadly sins. As we read in an English translation:

> This is the Castle of love and liss,
> Of solace, of succour, of joy, and bliss,
> Of hope, of heal, of sikerness,
> And full of all sweetness.

Its constable was Charity. In it the incarnate Son sought shelter against His three foes—the world, the flesh, and the devil—by which He was beset.

The causes of the Saviour's Coming are brought out in a colloquy between the mighty King of Heaven, His four daughters—Mercy, Sooth, Right, and Peace, and His co-equal Son. Mercy pleads for the delivery of the thrall Man from sad imprisonment; but Sooth and Right make objection; whereupon Peace suggests a ransom. The wise Son, to terminate the trouble, offers to take the thrall's weeds and suffer in his place.

The poem was written above all as a song of praise to Virgin and Son. In symbolic form it conveyed devoutly and sweetly to lay ears the chief points of the Christian faith, particularly such as concerned the vicarious redemption of fallen man. It was deliberately written in "romance" for those who had "ne lettrure ne clergie," and was not expected to have much "savour" for a clerk. Yet it was soon turned into Latin; and, for such as knew "neither French nor Latin"—so it is definitely stated—"for lewd men's behoof," it was afterwards put into English several times.

Before Grosseteste, a troubadour of northern Italy had written a secular *Chastel d'Amors*, and in his time Guillaume de Lorris († *c.* 1240) composed the first part of the *Roman de la Rose*, which was to spread the principles of courtly love and the taste for

allegory to all parts of Europe. These are present also in certain Anglo-French "debates" already referred to, *De Blaunchefloure et Florence*, and *De Melior et Idoine*, which discuss the same question as the Latin *De Phillide et Flora*, whether a knight or a clerk is the more worthy of a lady's love. In the Latin poem, the dispute is settled by the God of Love; in the French, however, by the bird-champions of the two sides. In one case the verdict is in favour of the knight, in the other of the clerk. The last stanza of the *De Blaunchefloure et Florence* asserts that the poem was written first in English by one Wanastre and translated into French by one Brykholle—an interesting and perhaps significant fact. In *Melior et Idoine* the scene is laid near Lincoln. The author begins by indicating the necessity of travel for one who wishes to have adventure and to learn of strange peoples:

Ki plus loinz va, plus verra,
E plus des aventures savra.
Jeo le sai bien, car prové l'ai;
En ma juvente m'en aloy
En plusurs teres a oïr
Aventures pur retenir.

This too is suggestive. Who were the men who wrote poems of this sort? Crusaders, perhaps, comrades of Richard Cœur de Lion and his troubadour friends—at least clerks of Vagabondia, who could and did communicate many foreign ideas to the English. "Adventure," says Chaucer, "is the mother of tidings."

In the fourteenth century were composed in England, in imitation of the productions of contemporary French writers like Guillaume de Machaut, Eustache Deschamps, and Froissart, French works similar in inspiration to the courtly love-poetry of the troubadours—ballades, roundels, lyric lays, virelays, complaints, *estampies*, *motets*, etc.—in general artificial, conventional, and monotonous, ringing eternal changes on the same threadbare themes, but of importance to us because in a measure they determined the productions of Chaucer, Gower, and other

English writers who at first wrote in the same style. From Gower's pen we have fifty French ballades of quite exceptional grace. Such writings as these, however, are hardly our present concern.

Drama

Though a consecutive account of the early history of the drama must be postponed to the second volume of this work, it deserves notice here that the Normans in England helped in the formation of a national stage. The beginnings of the Christian drama, as is well known, are to be traced to adaptations of the liturgy, produced and acted by the clergy in Latin within the holy sanctuary. Before the Conquest Latin liturgical plays existed in England, as well as on the Continent; but not until afterwards have we any trace of "mysteries" or "miracles." Indeed, in the twelfth century there seems to have been written in England the earliest extant mystery in the vulgar tongue, that, namely, which goes under the name of *Adam*. This remarkable work is composed of three parts: the Fall, the Death of Abel, and the Prophecies of Christ. Fortunately, in the unique manuscript in which it is preserved, are found detailed descriptions (in Latin) of the costumes and the *mise en scène*. The prophets were distinguished by their garb. Abraham wore white robes with a long beard; Aaron was dressed as a bishop; Moses bore the tables of stone. The poet was a man of uncommon talent; the scene of the seduction of Eve by the serpent has especially won the critics' praise. Another Anglo-Norman mystery of later date and much less value is the *Resurrection*, which nevertheless has definite interest, if only because of a prologue in which the director explains to the spectators the arrangement of the stage, with the different "mansions" of the players.

Here ends our rapid survey of extant French works produced by Englishmen. They have been grouped, it should be observed,

in the manner that will be followed in the treatment of those in English, which we are next, and more amply, to examine. Before our study is ended, it will be manifest that there exists no truly significant production in the native vernacular from the time of the Conquest to Chaucer which is not an imitation of, or at least prefigured by, a work accessible to the polite in French. Throughout the whole period, then, that now occupies us, the chief language of literature for educated laymen was what we now regard as a foreign tongue. A very extraordinary situation no doubt, and so it seemed also to our forefathers. "I ween," said Robert of Gloucester about 1300, "that there are in all the world no countries that do not hold to their own speech save England alone." In this statement, however, he was hardly correct. At that very time French was used in Italy also, to the great disregard and disadvantage of its own vernacular. Dante's master, Brunetto Latini (1230-1294), employed it in his encyclopædic *Trésor*. In French, Rustician of Pisa compiled his compendium of Arthurian romance, and his friend Marco Polo of Genoa (1254-1324) his book of Asiatic travel. French was, in truth, as Latini said, more "common to all people" and "more delightful" than any other vulgar speech in Western Europe. The esteem in which it was held in England is illustrated by the following passage of glowing praise from an English *Manière de Langage* of the fourteenth century:

> Le doulz françois, qu'est la plus bel et la plus gracious language et plus noble parler, apres latin d'escole, qui soit ou monde et de tous genz mieulx prisee et amee que nul autre; quar Dieux le fist si douce et amiable principalement a l'oneur et loenge de luy mesmes. Et pour ce il peut comparer au parler des angels du ciel, pour la grand doulceur et biaultee d'icel.

Certainly of English even the most ardent supporter of its use could make no such eulogy. English was then a timid speech. In different parts of the island its accents sounded unlike, its inflections contrasted strangely, its elements were disturbingly diverse. Outside of limited districts in England any one dialect was scarcely intelligible, and all were

counted as mere gibberish abroad, whereas French was understood not only by all cultivated men at home, but everywhere in the centres of Europe. With it alone an Englishman was well provided for foreign travel; with it he could address in his works what Gower calls the "université de tout le monde." No wonder it was earnestly studied by all who had any outlook, who saw even from afar the ways of the world. If we consider, in addition to this, the feeling of legitimate inheritance in its use that the English must have had, the desire of every one to master French appears to us not only intelligible but wise.

It remains to dispel a common misapprehension that the French of England were all, or even largely, of Norman descent, and the works they read peculiarly Norman in character. The army that the Conqueror led at Hastings was by no means composed exclusively of soldiers from his own duchy; and later from almost every part of France, from the Île de France as well as from Brittany, Maine, Guienne, Gascony, Aquitaine, and Poitou—once possessions of the English crown, knights and soldiers, artists, artisans, and traders, to say nothing of clergy, journeyed to England to advance themselves where opportunity was rich. With them they carried the tastes and sentiments to which they were used. And these are mirrored in the literature they favoured. It was not, above all, that which prevailed in Caen, Bayeux, and Rouen, but the style of Paris, then the paradise of the learned and literary world, that gave most delight. It was the works of such widely-famed poets as Crestien de Troyes (in Champagne), Guillaume de Lorris, and Jean de Meung (on the Loire) that were generally acclaimed. Cultivated Englishmen throughout the Middle Ages were acquainted with the finest productions of all France.

The history of architecture in England offers an instructive parallel to the history of literature. The architectural achievements of the mediæval period are not all in a single mode. Here also we must distinguish between Anglo-Norman and Anglo-French. The Anglo-Normans erected many handsome

edifices in the modified romanesque which they brought with them; but as early as the twelfth century pure Gothic structures were raised alongside of these, and eventually the latter style prevailed: the solid Norman with its round arches yielded in popularity to the more graceful pointed type of the Île de France. In the same way romances of love and adventure in the twelfth century developed alongside of rhymed chronicles and didactic treatises, refined lyrics and allegory alongside of solid legends and lives of saints. Moreover, even as the stately magnificence of early Gothic was later marred by over-careful decoration, so in the second part of the Middle Ages the dignity of French romance was diminished by its extravagance, and the impressive simplicity of the older poetry disturbed by excessive elaboration and undue emphasis on technique. The works of Chaucer, like the insular types of Gothic, show the reviving originality of the English people establishing a new national style on a foundation of borrowed art.

CHAPTER IV

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

A UNIFORM literary language, or anything approaching it, did not exist in England before the death of Chaucer in 1400. From very early times Englishmen had written Latin correctly, sometimes with elegance, and many of their works were current throughout Europe. For a century or two after the Conquest, pure French was employed by the cultivated with natural ease; and even in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the ordinary French spoken in England had become sadly corrupt as compared with the standard speech of Paris, it was essentially the same in the various parts of the land. But with English the situation was different. At no time from the Conquest to the death of Chaucer was there any one dominant form of speech; at no time did men of letters acknowledge a common standard, or strive for uniformity when they wrote. Even at the close of the fifteenth century, Caxton was greatly troubled by the variations in the vernacular, and found it "hard to please every man because of diversity and change of language." And not before 1589, when the *Art of English Poesie* attributed to Puttenham appeared, do we meet with any definite statement that one particular dialect was adhered to by literary men. The great divergence of English as commonly spoken in the north and south from "the usual speech of the court, and that of London within sixty miles, and not much above," the author fully recognised, but he exalted the last because no other was

"so courtly or so current," and bore witness that this was then frequently "written" by "gentlemen and others," if not by the common people of every shire.

In Middle English are preserved works in several fairly distinct dialects continuing in the main the divisions of Saxon speech. The dialect of the north, however, included a larger district than the ancient Northumbrian. It was spoken in the Scottish Lowlands, Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, in the north of Lancashire, and very probably in parts of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. To the end of the fourteenth century the language of the Lowlands, which is always called *Inglis*, is hardly to be distinguished from the Northern dialect. The real Scottish dialect begins about the middle of the fifteenth century, but was not so called until the sixteenth.

The field of the old Mercian came to be divided into two slightly divergent dialects called East and West Midland, extending in the west to the Welsh border, in the south to the banks of the Thames. At the middle of the thirteenth century, London, the capital of England since the time of Henry II., spoke essentially a south-east Saxon dialect; but as time went on London English lost its southern character, and at the end of the fourteenth century shared the characteristics of the Midland dialects, though with definite peculiarities.

The third chief division, that of the South, corresponding in general to the West Saxon and Kentish, embraces the whole territory south of the Thames, including the western counties of Gloucester, and (in part) Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Here too, however, are observed two groups: one, somewhat indefinite in its limitations, in the west and south, and another in Kent and the neighbouring district.

It is easier, it must be admitted, thus to state the confines of the various dialects than to determine where particular works belong. Two things above all are troublesome—first, the transformation that the records have undergone; and second, actual intermixture in the author's speech. Only in very rare instances

(*e.g.* the *Ormulum* and the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*) have we what appear to be autograph manuscripts. Usually texts must be studied in transcriptions of transcriptions, in which are manifest not only the blunders of copyists, but also the wilful changes in readings, the interpolations, and contractions of a succession of redactors. Scribes worked with great freedom, and not seldom transposed a whole poem from one dialect to another, making extensive alterations even in the rhymes, which are on the whole the best guide to original forms. Poems often appear in versions extraordinarily unlike, and the determination of the original dialect is sometimes guesswork pure and simple. Particularly is this the case with the productions of the minstrels, who never hesitated to adapt their narratives of whatever sort to the tastes and understanding of their hearers in different parts of the land. Fortunately, in such cases the determination of dialect is of very slight consequence to the student of literature.

Most worthy of consideration (particularly in connection with extant English romances) is the following lament that Richard of Bury voiced on behalf of his own well-beloved books:

> Our purity of race is diminished every day, while new authors' names are imposed upon us by worthless compilers, translators, and transformers, and losing our ancient nobility, while we are reborn in successive generations, we become wholly degenerate, and thus against our will the name of some wretched stepfather is affixed to us, and the sons are robbed of the names of their true fathers. . . . Ah! how often ye pretend that we who are ancient are but lately born, and try to pass us off as sons who are really fathers, calling us who have made you clerks the production of your studies. Indeed, we have derived our origin from Athens, though we are now supposed to be from Rome, for Carmentis was always the pilferer of Cadmus, and we who were but lately born in England, shall to-morrow be born again in Paris, and thence being carried to Bologna, shall obtain an Italian origin, based upon no affinity of blood. Alas! how ye commit us to treacherous copyists to be written, how corruptly ye read us and kill us by medication, while ye supposed ye were correcting us with pious zeal. Oftentimes we have to endure barbarous interpreters, and those who are ignorant of foreign idioms presume to translate us from one language into another; and thus all

propriety of speech is lost and our sense is shamefully mutilated contrary to the meaning of the author! Truly noble would have been the condition of books, if it had not been for the presumption of the tower of Babel, if but one kind of speech had been transmitted by the whole human race.

A mixture of dialects is apparent in writers who lived on the borderland between two districts, or in such as had emancipated themselves from provincialism by travel and study. Those who in their works were deliberately serving local interests, adhered most closely to the dialect of their own region. Naturally, the language of the capital had much advantage over any rival, and, as before in Athens, Rome, and Paris, the commercial and legislative centre of the realm now again set the standard of national speech. By good fortune, it was in the London dialect that Chaucer consistently wrote (although he occasionally used Kentish forms), and so great was his preëminence, and that of other prominent authors like Gower and Wycliffe, who used the same dialect, that writers throughout England gradually yielded their local custom to higher authority. For centuries men still spoke as they would according to inherited habit, but in writing they fashioned their phrases to accord with the conventions which had slowly established themselves at the chief seats of commerce and cultivation.

So far as the language of Middle English is concerned, it is usually divided into three periods: early, standard, and late, from 1100 to 1250, from 1250 to 1400, and from 1400 to 1500 respectively. The first period was the time of greatest linguistic unlikeness. Too few monuments exist to enable us to judge of the state of the language in the North in this period. In the South, however, and to a much less degree in the Midland, the inflections of nouns and pronouns steadily persisted; and final *e*, with sound-value, was in general retained. In the South, much more than in the Midland (especially the North Midland), a considerable number of French words then appeared in the vocabulary. In the second period the great literary dialect groups and linguistic centres were formed. In the North the

inflection of nouns was limited to one prevailing type; in the South there were usually two. Unaccented final *e* is still much retained in the South, but is almost wiped out in the North. Numerous French words have by this time taken their place in common speech, even in the North. Between 1400 and 1500 dialects gradually disappeared from the literature, and inflections approached the forms of modern English. Final unaccented *e* was disregarded even in London and the South. Scottish at last came to be distinct from the English of the North.

The chronological table appended to this volume will readily show the student when and where were composed the different English works of which mention will be made in the ensuing pages. Here a word of general orientation will suffice.

In 1066 English literature of the Saxon style seems to have been too decrepit to resist successfully the domination of the foreign types then introduced. What little remains of English dating from the next hundred years is chiefly religious or didactic in character; and in literary composition of this kind the South took the lead. It was in the neighbourhood of old Wessex, where King Alfred's influence had made itself felt, and where literature, stimulated by him, had been produced by others later, that the first stirrings of creative impulse are to be seen. The shadow that had rested over Northumbria since its early literary supremacy in the seventh and eighth centuries was rudely overthrown, it required five hundred years and more permanently to dispel. No significant English work was composed in the North until the end of the thirteenth century.

An effort to discover the temper of different parts of the country by considering the nature of extant productions in the several dialects has unfortunately yielded too uncertain results to make them worth record. Something valuable might be said of the character of writings in the West Midland, where conditions specially favourable to original work existed; but, in the main, dialect is the least instructive aspect of a Middle English poem that the literary critic can dwell upon.

CHAPTER V

ROMANCE

WITHOUT doubt the most comprehensive and significant division of mediæval vernacular literature is that which, accepting a broad interpretation, we call romance. No literary productions of the Middle Ages are so characteristic, none so perennially attractive, as those that treat romantically of heroes and heroines of bygone days.

Jean Bodel, who, towards the end of the twelfth century, wrote in verse of the wars of Charlemagne against the Saxons, has happily revealed the literary inclination of the cultivated of his time in the following significant words:

> Ne sont que trois matières à nul home entendant,
> De France, et de Bretagne, et de Rome la grant.

And these words have been so often quoted that they have come to be universally accepted as adequate titles for the leading divisions of romance. We now use the term "matter of France" to denote the narratives chiefly concerned with the Emperor Charlemagne, his peers and vassals, the struggles of French heroes. The "matter of Britain" has to do chiefly with King Arthur and his knights, the chivalrous exploits of British warriors, accounts based largely on tales of Celtic origin, or on traditions current in Great or Little Britain. Finally, the "matter of Rome" suggests at once that the stories it embodies deal with the wonderful achievements of antiquity. These different

"matters" we shall discuss in the order given by Bodel, developing, however, two more by separating from the matter of Britain stories of Germanic origin, and from that of Rome those that have their source in the Orient. We shall deal most particularly, of course, with the records in English speech; but we shall find ourselves forced by the very nature of the subject to survey the whole field, and to consider works in several languages, in order to estimate justly those in our own.

We begin with the matter of France, which, though in its inception epic in style, was transformed into the likeness of romance, and by the time it was treated in English was hardly distinguishable therefrom. Obviously, the Carlovingian cycle is "popular" as the other cycles are not. Here is literature that in the beginning was composed both for and by the people, the preservative as well as the product of their communal self-consciousness. It is characterised by the directness of their thought, shows the satisfaction in the extravagant and grotesque that they exhibit, and betrays the spontaneous enthusiasm of their social and religious emotions. The mediæval cycles of Britain and Rome, on the contrary, resulted from the creative imaginations of individuals of, or under the influence of, the aristocratic class, the deliberate refashioning of material of ancient times to gratify a sophisticated taste — material, moreover, not only ancient but foreign, calculated rather to inspire feelings of bewildered delight than, like the national epic, heart-moving patriotism and eagerness to do. Yet, as has just been said, these various cycles of narrative appear much the same in the end. In the history of their gradual change is mirrored the development of civilisation in Western Europe.

The Matter of France

A version of the *Chanson de Roland* seems to have been the first song that the conquering Normans chanted in England: it inspired them to victory in the famous Battle of Hastings,

when Harold fell, and a momentous epoch of foreign domination was ushered in. Then, Wace tells us, a minstrel Taillefer rode before the host, singing "of Charlemagne, and of Roland, and of Oliver, and of the knights who died at Ronceval." The proud warriors of William no doubt thought that in moving against England they were acting like the old heroes of Northern France, with whose fame they had long been familiar; their leader was to them another Charlemagne; he too fought under the banner of the Church, with the approval of the Pope; he too was a successful chieftain, a wise administrator, an enlightened ruler, like the historic emperor of the Franks. So, likewise, not long ago, consideration of Charlemagne's more or less legendary achievements fired the imagination of the great Napoleon, and encouraged the inordinate ambition that was the soul of his career.

The Normans had a share in the development of the national epic of France. They regarded it as theirs before they came to England; and, during their close connection with the Continent, they preserved it as a record of their race. But as the abyss between them and their kin abroad yawned wider and wider with the passing years, as they came more and more deeply to feel antagonism for the French, they grew disposed to regard Charlemagne as the hero of their opponents, and in course of time ceased altogether to sing of him as their own. Arthur, King of the Britons, they exalted instead—a rival to Charlemagne in brilliancy, Christian virtues, and imperial sway; and the Saxons and Danes followed their lead.

The English, like the Germans and other peoples, revered the memory of Charlemagne, particularly because they regarded him as the first great Christian king. In the interests of the Church the different nations of the world made common cause. And Charlemagne, the most distinguished Defender of the Faith, they heard of with the joy of devotion. His exploits were brilliant, vastly interesting in themselves to bold warriors, but they were enhanced to universal importance as struggles in behalf

of Christianity. Under these circumstances it is not surprising to find the national element less conspicuous in foreign redactions of French poems than the religious or purely warlike. In the ancient epic of Roland, the incitement of the French was as much for the honour of "la douce France" as in behalf of God; but foreigners minimised this motive. The Emperor's followers they represented first and foremost as proselytising zealots, not averse to martyrdom, rather than as patriots stimulated primarily by love of their land.

The cycle of poems concerning Charlemagne, his peers and vassals, is composed in the main of what are called *chansons de geste*. This name indicates two essential qualities of their nature. They were in the beginning "songs," the outpourings of the people's thought under strong emotional impulse; they were anonymous and impersonal; they voiced public, not private sentiment; they echoed and established national opinion. Then, again, they originally dealt with the *gesta*, or deeds of real warriors: they were records of actual events. In course of time, however, the final significance of the name *chanson de geste* in both its parts was changed. The early *cantilenae*, or lyrical songs in chorus, which first bore it, were transformed by professional poets (*jongleurs*) from the eleventh century on, and stamped with personality. They were recited, to the accompaniment of music, by individuals. In the hands of trouvères later, for some three centuries, they were continuously remodelled, and adapted for private reading as well as public recital. Finally, they were rewritten and printed as chap-books in prose. The contents of the poems likewise steadily underwent change. *Geste* came soon to mean an epic poem, or a cycle dealing with an "epic family." By a further degeneration in England, it was loosely used for almost any sort of poem, or even prose tale. Men spoke of the *Geste of King Horn* and the *Geste of Robin Hood*; they prepared "jest-books."

The *chansons de geste* in their early forms were distinguished from the chivalric romances by their peculiar metre. They were

composed in clusters of decasyllabic verses of very unequal extent (varying from a few to hundreds of lines), joined by a uniform assonance. After a while, rhyme was introduced, at first spasmodically, then to the transformation of the whole. In the end, as we have seen, the old epics were diluted in prose. Nowhere is the long assonanced line employed in an English Charlemagne romance. Alliteration, a natural metre for such warlike epics, is only fitfully used. Otherwise, very divergent forms of verse appear, the septenarius with internal rhyme, various forms of tail-rhyme-strophe, short rhymed couplets, and even the four-line ballad measure. Within the same poems, as they now exist, different metres are sometimes combined.

The most important of the whole cycle is the oldest preserved, the famous *Chanson de Roland*, which is thought to have taken shape about the middle of the eleventh century. It relates the disaster that overtook part of Charlemagne's army at Ronceval, a pass in the Pyrenees, in which the hero Roland, above all his fellows, gained for himself immortal renown, and the traitor Ganelon lasting disgrace. The story has but slight historical foundation. The chronicler Eginhard, in his authentic record of Charles's life, informs us that on August 15, 778, the rear-guard of a great French host, returning from a triumphant campaign in Spain, were set upon and destroyed by a body of Gascon mountaineers, and in the struggle Roland, the "Count of the Marches of Brittany," with other French leaders, lost their lives. These incidents were amazingly modified in later literary presentation. In the era of the Crusades, it was natural to picture the Basques, who opposed the French, as heathen Saracens. They were represented as having a force enormously superior to the Christians, and their attack was successful only because of the treasonable conduct of one of the peers themselves: Ganelon, for mean reward, was led to play the part of Judas Iscariot amongst them. The scene of the conflict was altered to make defeat more reasonable; the armament of the host was adapted to contemporary custom; a suitable revenge on their

opponents, of course, the French achieved; and Ganelon met the fate he deserved. God sided with His army, and answered the prayer of the patriarchal Emperor when, like Joshua, he begged that the sun might stand still. Roland, though historically inconspicuous in the battle, was made the centre of the narrative. He is pictured as the nephew of Charlemagne, the object of Ganelon's hate, the chief combatant, through whose valorous rashness in not sounding his ivory horn to warn the army of his plight, the tragedy was superinduced. Through the might of his noble sword Durendal and his own strong arm, he wrought wonders while his life endured. Oliver, wiser yet not less valiant, is placed beside him as a contrasting companion. He is the brother of Roland's beloved, Aude, who is introduced at the close, dying of sorrow, to enforce the poetic pathos of the encounter. Charlemagne in 778 was only thirty-six; but he is conceived as a venerable king *à la barbe fleurie*, even two hundred years of age. Nevertheless, he engages actively in battle, and has all the attributes of majesty. We see him seated in an arm-chair of gold—grave, silent, determined, unrelenting—an imposing, grandiose figure.

The extant form of the epic was originally composed, it seems, in Brittany, and later worked over in Anjou by a Frenchman of the Île de France. In his hands it was infused with a spirit of nationality and royalty, foreign to the early songs. The redactor worked at will. His effort was to make the scene dramatic, and, despite certain inconsistencies in the treatment, he displayed great art. Though unadorned and sometimes monotonous, his style is dignified and impressive. The constant use of formulæ and conventions does not destroy the effect of his simple, vigorous lines. Above all noteworthy are two qualities of the poem: its pervasive religious tone and its exalted expression of nationality. It is permeated with the intense religious convictions of the age in which it was shaped; it contains the finest fruit of early French patriotism. Warlike and vehement emotions blend with tenderness and subduing pathos to voice the sentiments of

a strong and dominant race, yet one easily swayed by noble precept and example.

The *Chanson de Roland* is best preserved in a manuscript at Oxford, written in England in the twelfth century. It was, we may be certain, a delight to the Anglo-Normans, and to their descendants. When acquaintance with French was no longer general in the land, at the end of the fourteenth century, or thereabouts, the narrative was reproduced in the English vernacular in a poem now but fragmentarily preserved. The theme is freely treated; and it is not evident whether the author used simply a rhymed version, which had supplanted the assonanced one in popular favour, or this earlier one as well. He had plainly very little talent, though he showed considerable independence of manner. The characters are more conventional and commonplace; the art of the style is infinitely less; there is no skill in handling the metre, no epic sweep, no terse phrasing. An incident introduced from the so-called *Chronicle of Turpin*, the picture of the supposed revelry of the French knights with Saracen women on the eve of the battle, afforded the writer a welcome occasion to denounce wine and women, if not song.

One fact about the *Roland*, which detracts from its merit as a national epic, is that it voices the sentiments of only a restricted class. It is purely feudal in tone, appealing primarily to men of arms. The *bourgeoisie* no doubt enjoyed it; but it was not written with them in mind. Primarily for them, on the contrary, was composed, it appears, another ancient poem, of the second half of the eleventh century, the *Pilgrimage of Charlemagne*. Apart from its inherent interest as an entertaining story, it has value as an example of what we may call early middle-class literature, as the first specimen in extant writing of *l'esprit gaulois*, and as an illustration of how material of totally different character can be combined to good effect when a writer possesses both wit and skill. The jongleurs not only recited in the halls of barons for their entertainment, or on the field of battle for their inspiration; some at least of them condescended to amuse the common

people at public fairs. At one of these assemblies held at St. Denis, near Paris, was recited a tale of how Charlemagne once travelled in majesty to the Holy City, where he was treated with infinite respect, and returned laden with invaluable relics. Into the same narrative, however, was interwoven a comic section which must have aroused as much laughter as the other part devotion. The king is pictured as visiting Constantinople on his way, and as there getting himself into a sorry plight by his drunkenness and vainglory, so that he only extricated himself from ruin by means of miracles wrought for him by God. The incongruous elements are of divergent source: the serious part is based on heroic tradition; the comic, it has recently been shown, is probably the transformation of a mythical tale.

We have in English in a late ballad redaction an ancient story called *King Arthur and King Cornwall*, which seemingly throws light on the sort of material the minstrel adapted to his humorous purpose. It tells how Arthur, being nettled by Guinevere's remark that there is in a place that she knows of but will not reveal, a Round Table vastly finer than his, swears never to sleep two nights in one place until he sees it. With several companions he sets out in disguise, and finally comes to Cornwall, where at a magician's house one night they make great brags, which they would ignominiously have failed to accomplish had it not been for a helpful friend (or rather fiend) whose services they managed to enlist. The most conspicuous feature of this ballad, as well as of the *Pilgrimage*, is the extravagant gabs which in true Norseman fashion both Arthur's knights and Charlemagne's peers are represented as making readily when merry, and lamenting ruefully when sober. Constantinople (a regular name for the Otherworld, where are revolving castles and such wonders) was on the route to Jerusalem, and Charlemagne was pictured as wending his way to the Orient on a double purpose—to show his piety in the Holy City, and to test the truth of his wife's ill-advised assertion that Hugo, Emperor of Constantinople, was handsomer than he. The "gabs" that he and his peers make in Hugo's

hall, which, being overheard by a spy, they are obliged to perform, are such as the ancestors of the Normans, and they themselves no doubt, indulged in; and they were familiar with tales of Otherworld journeys current in Brittany. It was an inspiration to weld these elements together with an account of the traditional visit of Charlemagne to Jerusalem; for the French poem as it stands is remarkable to a high degree. It was a tale current among the Anglo-Normans, and relished by them. The unique manuscript of it was written in England in the thirteenth century by an Englishman who, it is clear, had inadequate mastery of French.

This significant introduction of alien material into the framework of Carlovingian romance, by which it was enlarged and enriched, is exhibited curiously in a very late Scottish poem, *Ralph Collier*, which is regularly separated from the rest of the English Charlemagne romances, and lauded as the most original of all. Its originality, however, does not consist, as many seem to think, in the author's invention, but simply in the adaption of long-existing material, of a sort particularly favoured in England, to make it fit Charlemagne rather than an English monarch. It recounts the experience of a king in chance association with a low-born subject, a theme which occurs in several rhymed tales, of which the best known are *King Edward III. and the Tanner of Tamworth*, and *King Henry II. and the Miller of Mansfield*. Like the *Pilgrimage*, it too evinces rough humour and middle-class sentiment.

But these, though in some respects the most interesting, were not the only poems dealing with the matter of France that were current in England. From the fourteenth century, or the beginning of the fifteenth, date half-a-dozen metrical romances, none of which, however, require more than a cursory examination here. The set may be roughly divided into two cycles, with Otuel (Otinel) and Ferumbras (Fierabras) as titular personages. The former is made up of several poems, one of which (*Otuel*) is preserved in the Auchinleck MS. The same material was treated in a poem entitled *Duke Roland and Sir Ottuell of Spain*, and in another

version now lost except in a summary made by Ellis. Of the two extant versions, *Otuel* shows the freer treatment. The author emphasised the warlike and neglected the romantic elements of his original, the French *Otinel*, a *chanson de geste* of the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century. Otuel is a Saracen knight who fights in single combat with Roland. During the combat a dove descends from heaven upon him, and he declares himself ready to accept Christianity. He marries Belesant, the king's daughter, and fights on the side of the Christians against the heathen in Lombardy.

This appears to have been only part of a lost cyclic poem, to which the name *Charlemagne and Roland* has been given. Other portions are preserved in the English *Roland and Vernagu* and *The Siege of Milan*. It recounted the deeds of Charlemagne during a journey to Constantinople, and a subsequent campaign in Spain against the Saracens, which was concluded by a mighty duel between Roland and Vernagu, a black giant forty feet high, champion of the Sultan of Babylon. This duel lasted two days. It is marked by the picturesque incident that once when the giant, being very tired, is allowed by Roland a period for sleep, and still rests uneasily, his generous opponent places a stone under his head to ease his discomfort. Finally, receiving divine aid, Roland is victorious, and presents Vernagu's head to the king. The *Siege of Milan* narrates how, after certain rebuffs, the French army takes Milan. Archbishop Turpin is the central figure, and to him is due the honour of the victory. The Fillingham MS., which Ellis summarised, related in some 11,000 lines the whole history of Charlemagne from the beginning of the conquest of Spain to the disaster at Ronceval, the defeat of the Saracens, and the punishment of Ganelon.

To the Ferumbras cycle belong the two English poems of *The Sowdone* (*Sultan*) *of Babylon* and *Sir Ferumbras*. The former tells how the Saracens entered Rome and carried off the holy relics; the latter how these were recovered by Charlemagne in an expedition to Spain. The most interesting feature of *Sir*

Ferumbras is the fight of Oliver with the huge heathen Ferumbras, who boastfully challenges the hero, but after a terrible struggle is overcome and consents to be baptized. His sister (Floripas), being in love with Guy of Burgundy, one of the French knights, gives aid to the Christians, which enables them to recover the relics. Her father Balan is put to death because he will not be baptized. In France *Fierabras* was one of the most popular of the late *chansons de geste*. That it was popular also in England is clear from the striking passage in Barbour's *Bruce*, where the hero is represented as reciting the romance to his followers at the difficult passage of Loch Lomond, to reinvigorate their courage.

In the romances we have just examined are extant about 16,000 lines of English verse written approximately in the age of Chaucer; and this is but a small fraction of what formerly existed. No poem is preserved in more than a single copy. All are more or less free translations from the French (Anglo-Norman?), but the exact originals are not known. Had we no single one of these English romances, we should still be able to assert with confidence knowledge of Carlovingian tradition on the part of Chaucer's contemporaries, if only from the references to Charlemagne in literature, his celebration as one of the Nine Worthies, and the numerous pieces of tapestry commemorating his exploits. But his fame was most surely perpetuated in England by the late redactions of his history now to be examined.

Not long after the printing-press was established in London, Caxton presented his English public with "reductions" of two long prose romances of this cycle. The first dealt with "the right puyssant, vertuous and noble" King Charles the Great, and was based on a late transformation of *Fierabras* into which much new material had been introduced. "The most part of this book," Caxton observes, "is made to thonour of Frenssh men," but also, he adds, "for prouffyte of every man," inasmuch as "the werkes of the anncient and old peple ben for to gyve to

us ensample to lyve in good and vertuous operacions digne and worthy of helth in folowyng the good and eschewying the evyl."

Charles the Great appeared in 1485. Five years later, Caxton turned into English with pious fidelity the romance of *Renaud de Montauban*, or, as the printer entitled it, "the right pleasant and goodly historie of the Four Sons of Aymon." Here we have recorded the wars of Charlemagne with rebellious vassals. Our sympathy is enlisted in the cause of the latter because the king is pictured as cruel and tyrannical, a "doting old man," whose conduct is reprehensible at every turn. Yet we appreciate as admirable the allegiance of his older barons, who, come what will, are always true to their feudal vows. The noble Aymon and his son Renaud are the embodiment of honour, and scorn advantage gained by deceit. The interest of the brothers' achievements is greatly enhanced by the performances of the famous steed Bayard, who almost as much as Renaud is the hero of the tale. According to popular tradition, he may still be heard to neigh in the forest of the Ardennes. Even so Achilles, Cuchulinn, Sigurth, Launfal, Beves, and others were helped and comforted by their devoted steeds. This work enjoyed great popularity, and is frequently mentioned, not always with approval. In 1598, for example, Francis Meres included it in a list of works "hurtful to youth."

There are in French no less than eighteen *chansons* on the wars of Charlemagne against his vassals, in which he is usually exhibited as a weak old fool whom his barons despise. This debasing of the king's character was evidently due to the ever-increasing feeling of independence of contemporary French barons towards their suzerains, which finally caused the disintegration of feudalism. Another circumstance that led to the remodelling of epic tradition was the popularity of Arthurian romance. Its influence brought about the infusion of a new spirit and tone. All was no longer war and struggle. Women became more and more conspicuous. Love-making and magic

appeared everywhere. New heroes vied with old in deeds of chivalry.

The new romantic, rather than the old belligerent, spirit pervades *The Book of Duke Huon de Bordeaux*, which was printed in 1534 by Wynkyn de Worde, not like his predecessor Caxton in a crude translation of his own, but as "done into English by Sir John Bourchier, Lord Berners," the translator of Froissart. Here at last we have an English Charlemagne romance admirable in style and important in influence. Lord Berners wrote very dignified prose, and his *Huon* was utilised by Spenser in the *Faërie Queene*, by Shakspere in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and by Keats in *Endymion*. Huon is most interesting as a hero when his career resembles that of his Arthurian prototypes. Oberon, his constant helper, is a genuine fairy king, who aids his favourite with the unfaltering devotion and the unlimited resources characteristic of his class. The fairy conceptions of the romance appear much altered in Shakspere's play: Oberon seems of a different race from Robin Goodfellow and Puck. But in reality all may have a basis in Celtic mythology diversely developed. If Oberon is a creature of elaborate romances, the others are the offspring of folk-tales of obscure origin. Shakspere was successful in merging the two products of the people's thought. He borrowed from *Huon*; but, what is more important, he caught the spirit of fairy tradition which had circulated in Britain for long ages before.

Chaucer tells us that in Arthur's time England was "fulfilled of fayerye," and the statement was in a way true of his own age. Literature in England dealing with this theme has always been stimulated and aided by conceptions living among the people, vitalised as nowhere else by the electric current of sympathetic belief. There is, indeed, no literature that compares with the English in the prominence of fairy lore as a subject of inspiration. Even now Celtic poets lead us back to "shadowy waters" and bid us linger there in reverie—where the air "nimbly and sweetly" doth commend itself unto our gentle senses. We follow gladly;

for the domain of fairyland is as enchanting to-day as it has ever been, and we have not broken with the traditions of our race.

That there never arose in England a truly national cycle of poems, like those that form the early epic of Charlemagne, is due no doubt to the vicissitudes of politics in the island. National enthusiasm was ever ready to voice itself in songs of war. Pæans of rejoicing were sung by Englishmen after victory; the glory of praise rewarded every popular hero who fought for the land. But there was no great centre to group them about; a genuine national epic it was impossible to develop in early England during the epic age because of the heterogeneous traditions that then conflicted with one another. The nearest approach, of course, is the story of Arthur. A brilliant effort was made and earnestly prosecuted to uplift him as the national hero. But the result fell far short of the aim. Arthurian romance is a superb product, yet in no wise the embodiment of English nationality. Arthur's fame as an imperial monarch rested too obviously on fiction to remain in discriminating times a basis of national boast. Nevertheless, throughout the Middle Ages it was earnestly exalted, and served in no small degree to unite in a common sentiment the different elements then blending to form the English people.

If we contrast the cycle of Arthur with that of Charlemagne, we see at once the basis for their different character: the foundations are unlike. The matter of Britain was in its beginning largely myth and fable; that of France was idealised fact. No one would dream of turning to an Arthurian poem for facts of history; the historical basis of the epic of Charlemagne is a subject of constant study. When men read the stories of King Arthur and his knights they felt the glamour of mystery; they were bespelled by unreality, by visions. The Carlovingian struggles, on the contrary, stirred them to action, made them grasp their swords and prepare for battle. The popularity and influence of the Frankish epic in early times was enormous, not only in France, but abroad in nearly every country of Europe, above all

in Italy. But its power has steadily waned. Descriptions of battles and disputes, endlessly strung out and necessarily much of a kind, could not hold their own in rivalry with the Celtic narratives of love and adventure, infinite in variety and ever captivating by suggestion. We are to-day profoundly stirred by the stories of King Arthur. Poets, artists, musicians find in them an inspiration to their best efforts. They are ever new. But Charlemagne we have outgrown, and of all his once illustrious paladins hardly one is popularly known among us.

The Matter of Britain

Origin and Development

Arthur is a threefold creation. In the upbuilding of this marvellous figure, materials have been drawn from three sources. Around the monument of actual fact, above the grave of a valiant leader of the Britons, the brier of myth and the rose of romance have woven themselves together in enduring embrace. There was, all now agree, an historical Arthur, who occupied a conspicuous place in the written and unwritten annals of the early Welsh. In the course of time this famous hero of a rapidly receding past came to be associated with the ancients of his race and took on mythological attributes. Little by little he became the centre round which saga and sentiment revolved, and at last, after some seven centuries of changing fortunes, he appeared with his present romantic personality, as noble as unique, as brilliant as supreme.

How did this come about? Who was the historical Arthur? Why was he called to association with the Celtic gods? What occasioned his idealisation by his own and other races? When and where was he transformed into a picturesque king, and given a worthy following of noble knights? These are the questions that will occupy our attention in the present section. We must first strive to get a clear idea of Arthur as he appears in the early chronicles; we shall then endeavour to see him with the eyes of

the ancient Welsh; finally, we shall try to picture him seated on the glittering throne provided for him by Geoffrey of Monmouth and the French poets, in the midst of his retainers, at a splendid court.

We have no certain mention of Arthur's name in any historical document that goes back in its present form to a period earlier than the beginning of the ninth century; but we can safely assert that it occurred in a redaction of that document which was put into shape about a century and a half earlier; and there is every reason to believe that some of his achievements are referred to in a history which was almost contemporary with the events of his life.

Arthur is first mentioned by name in the *Historia Britonum* of an author called Nennius. This little work has of late been the subject of minute investigation by distinguished scholars, and has occasioned much dispute. Into the details of this discussion we need not here enter. Suffice it to state briefly a few facts regarding it which seem fairly well established. The *Historia* is not an original work by a single author, but rather a summary of such information on early British history as was accessible to a learned man about the year 800. It had been gradually brought together. From a Latin life of St. Germanus one Run map Urbgen, who lived until 627, made excerpts, which an historiographer in the year 679 transformed into a British history, with Vortigern as the central figure, to which he prefixed an introduction. This work appears to have been, on the whole, well constructed and attractive. Its unity, however, was soon disturbed by interpolations, and thus the ground was prepared for the further amplification by Nennius, finally shaped by him, it seems, about 826.

The statements regarding Arthur in Nennius are confirmed by the evidence of the saintly historian Gildas, Arthur's contemporary. His chief work, *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*, is a violent denunciation of the people of his time, written evidently by an ardent ecclesiastic proud of his birthright as a

Roman citizen. Gildas relates that after the death of Ambrosius Aurelianus there followed a time of ceaseless warring with the Saxon invaders, in which "nunc cives, nunc hostes vincebant." This period of varying success was finally ended by a brilliant victory at Mount Badon, when the Saxons received such a crushing defeat that for nearly half a century the British enjoyed comparative peace. Now Nennius tells us that after the time of Ambrosius, Arthur fought against the Saxons in twelve battles, the last of which was the famous Mount Badon. And there can be little if any doubt that Gildas and Nennius here record the same events, and that Arthur was that triumphant leader of the Britons who vanquished the foreign hosts.

The position the historical Arthur occupied is clearly defined by Nennius in these words: "pugnabat cum regibus Brittonum, sed ipse dux erat bellorum." Arthur was a "dux bellorum" of the Britons; and thus appears to have occupied a position that existed before the withdrawal of the Roman troops, and was later continued as part of the organisation necessary to ensure the country's defences. When, under Constantine in 407, the Romans definitely withdrew from Britain, utter chaos did not ensue. There was a Roman party in the land, and the control was left in their hands. They simply maintained the organisation elaborated under the Roman rule. During the fifth century the British were hard pressed by the Saxon invaders, against whom they waged constant warfare; but under their leader Arthur, who seems, however, to have been only a military commander (*gwledig*), they gained, not far from the year 500, after a series of successes, a glorious victory at Mount Badon. This event was followed by a half-century of peace, during which Arthur's heroism was no doubt more and more exalted. In the second half of the sixth century, when the Britons again met with reverses, they must have reverenced as never before the memory of the brave leader who had previously brought them success. Arthur became a name to conjure with. And very soon, like a powerful magnet, it drew to itself whatever floating

materials of myth, legend, and saga were not otherwise indissolubly connected.

The paragraph about Arthur in the *Historia Britonum* of the early ninth century was, it is now believed by scholars, already in the version of the year 679, from which it was taken up into the Nennius redaction. But there can be no doubt that even in the seventh century this was by no means all that was to be said of him; for he meanwhile had become the hero of mythological tales. Whether this was occasioned by the possible circumstance that his name was so similar to that of a Welsh deity that identification or confusion was easy, or, more probably, by the fact that popular heroes have, since the beginning of the world, invariably been glorified by their devotees, and made to shine with borrowed splendour, it is impossible to say. It is clear, at all events, that much of what Welsh tradition says of Arthur is the detritus of early myth. "The very first thing that strikes one in reading the *Mabinogion*," as Matthew Arnold points out in his essay *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, "is how evidently the mediæval story-teller is pillaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret; he is like a peasant building his hut on the site of Halicarnassus or Ephesus; he builds, but what he builds is full of materials of which he knows not the history, or knows by a glimmering tradition merely;—stones 'not of this building,' but of an older architecture, greater, cunninger, more majestical."

All attempts to reconstruct the mythological Arthur, to show him to be truly a member of the Welsh pantheon, have been received with scepticism; for it does not follow that attributes or adventures ascribed to him in tradition or romance of late date are anything more than features of the ancient mythology of the British transferred from the personages with whom they were originally connected to him who in the course of time had become the supreme hero of the Welsh. After the old religion had disappeared, the primitive stories of the gods were repeated over and over again, but they were no longer viewed in the same light as in heathen times. We may feel certain that the Welsh

who transferred myths to Arthur were but vaguely, if at all, conscious of their early significance. Even as the gods were treated euhemeristically, as men and heroes, so the stories told about them could be rationalised and transferred to real warriors. Arthur's preëminent position as the saviour of his people in the time of sore need, their mainstay during their last period of prosperity and independence, naturally led to his being crowned with laurels of grateful memory, and forgotten deities were stripped of their possessions to contribute to his glory. Every effort was made to enhance his reputation for valorous achievement. In the popular imagination he became the leader of a great host of picked followers, brought together from history and tradition regardless of their age and environment.

The gathering that assembled about Arthur in his hall Ehangwen was totally different from that which was wont to hold its revelry in Caerleon or Camelot. A rough, uncouth set were the Welsh band. Their accomplishments were numerous and varied, but not of the sort that captivate the modern mind. We hear no more of Sol than that he was able to hold himself on one foot the whole day, and we wonder what advantage came to Arthur from such a follower. What did it profit him that Ychdryt Varyvdraws was able to project his bristling red beard over the forty-eight rafters of his hall? Surely no pleasure could be had from association with Gwevyl, son of Gwestat, who when he was sad let one of his lips fall below his waist, while the other he put as a hood over his head. And when we read of Gwallgoyc that though there were a hundred houses in the town where he lived, if he happened to lack anything, he did not let sleep close the eyes of a single person while he was there, we come to the conclusion that he must have been an unwelcome guest. If Arthur had many such in his train, he was doubtless as much feared wherever he went as the notorious bearsarks of Scandinavian heathendom.

Some of his followers, however, were doubtless extremely useful. He had an interpreter to whom all tongues were known,

and who could speak with birds and animals. He had a guide who served as well in a country he had not seen as in his own. He had a magician who, in case he was in a heathen country, could spread enchantment round about so that he and his companions were not seen by any one, though they saw all. There was another of his men, Clust the son of Clustveinad, who would certainly have made a good watchman; for, when buried seven cubits beneath the earth, he could hear the ant fifty miles off rise from its nest in the morning. Guinevere had two attendants whose feet, we are told, were as swift as their thoughts when bearing a message. But her husband's envoy was of a more picturesque character: "When he intended to go on a message for his lord, he never sought to find a path, but, knowing whither he was to go, if his way lay through a wood he went along the tops of the trees. During his whole life, a blade of reed grass bent not beneath his feet, much less did one ever break, so lightly did he tread." Arthur had one person specially trained as a sort of battering-ram. His mission was to clear aside all obstacles that impeded the King's progress: "The soles of his feet emitted sparks of fire when they struck upon things hard, like the heated mass when drawn out of a forge." When Arthur and his hosts came before a torrent, they would seek a narrow place and then summon Osla Gyllellvawr, who had a short broad dagger, which, when laid across the water, formed a bridge sufficient for the armies of the three Islands of Britain, and of the three Islands adjacent, with their spoil. Assuredly, it was no ordinary body of men that marched with Arthur in ancient Wales.

Such were those, according to the tale of *Kulhwych and Olwen*, who in early times gathered about Arthur's board. The celebrated Round Table is a primitive Welsh tradition, based on customs which have been traced back to the pan-Celtic age. To Layamon we are indebted for preserving the story of its foundation, the explanation of its nature. It was built, we learn, to prevent quarrels about precedence, so constructed that each,

having as good a place as his neighbour, had no occasion for jealous strife. It could seat sixteen hundred men, if necessary, and yet was so arranged that it could be folded up and carried easily on a journey. In this it resembled Odin's ship Skithblathnir, which could hold all who desired to get aboard, and yet when not needed would fold up like a cloth and fit into its owner's wallet. The Round Table doubtless had the magic property of providing unlimited supplies of food for all who sat about it, even as the Holy Grail satisfied all who were honoured by its sight.

Our conception of Arthur, however, is very far from that conveyed by early historical records, far from the primitive Welsh conception of him as superhuman and mysterious. Arthur is to us a king, a glorious monarch, surrounded by a group of brilliant knights. How did the world come so to regard him? Surely not because there was anything to suggest it in Welsh traditional tales. Arthur must needs have a well-accredited place in history before he could conquer the world. He had to be pictured as the *beau idéal* of noble chivalry before he could assume sway over the lords of feudal France. And this was brought about by Geoffrey of Monmouth. The world was waiting for an embodiment of chivalric ideals whom men might glorify by imitation. The heroes of antiquity were too much the product of unlike conditions. Charlemagne was too stern and real, too ascetic and devout. Arthur, on the contrary, exactly suited the taste of the time. He inhabited a distant, unknown land, where the imagination could roam undisturbed. A mist of marvel enshrouded him and his mighty men of valour. Pious enough to satisfy the requirements of the Church, he was at the same time sufficiently worldly to captivate the fancy of secular knights, and by his gallantry able to excite the emotions of the romantically disposed ladies who were then beginning to control the destinies of men of arms. Without Geoffrey's book Arthur would not so widely have won his way into the refined circles of England and France. It was he who made possible his triumphant career.

In Geoffrey's *Historia*, it is important to observe, we have the first presentation of our hero-king as a full-orbed personality with a well-rounded career. In his new picture of Arthur we have all the elements of mediæval romance. Arthur is, we see, the combination of the varying ideals of the people as embodied in many types. He now appears as a saga-hero, a national leader, a defender of the faith, a world-conquerer, a romantic adventurer, a mythical warrior, an immortal king.

Fundamentally, Geoffrey's account is based on Nennius. Despite the very great alterations it has undergone, the figure of Arthur still appears in much the same light as before. He is still celebrated as a chieftain who vanquishes the Saxon invaders of his country. He is preëminently a brave and victorious warrior, the champion of a nation's liberty. But he is now far more than this. To satisfy the natural demands of the Normans for more information regarding so exalted a personage, Geoffrey fashioned for him a suitable career. His parentage and youth had, of course, to be remarkable, and the historian was impelled to take hints ready at hand: Arthur's birth and boyhood are like those of the typical saga-hero. Like Finn and Mongan and Cormac, and many others, he is represented as begotten out of wedlock, the child of love. His father is a king, who, conceiving a passion for the beautiful young wife of a jealous old duke, one of his counsellors, swears he shall die if his longings are not fulfilled, and manages by deceit, with the connivance of a magician skilled in shape-shifting, to satisfy his desires. The boy thus begotten is destined to have a glorious career. He early shows his prowess. His father being treacherously slain, he begins to reign at fifteen years. He is an ideal of beauty, courage, and generosity. Immediately he is surrounded by a valiant following. Soldiers flock to him from all quarters. He forms a sort of feudal *comitatus*, and "the better to keep up his bounty, he resolves to make use of his courage, and to fall upon the Saxons, that he may enrich his followers with their wealth." A splendid light beats upon this royal youth from the very

beginning. Witness, for example, Geoffrey's description of his conduct in the battle of Mount Badon, in which the Saxons were brilliantly overcome and the cause of God abundantly vindicated. As Wordsworth puts it:

> Amazement runs before the towering casque
> Of Arthur, bearing through the stormy field
> The Virgin sculptured on his Christian shield.

The twelve battles recorded by Nennius Geoffrey reduces in number, makes them occur in a single campaign, and greatly amplifies his original by the introduction of circumstantial story, drawn unquestionably in part from popular tradition otherwise connected. Nevertheless, in this section of his narrative he clearly follows the suggestions of the earlier chronicle. Throughout he pictures Arthur as a furious fighter and a relentless slayer of his foes.

Geoffrey's narrative of Arthur's life does not end, as so frequently with popular heroes, with the description of his *enfances*. The Saxon wars over, he enters at once upon a new career as world-conqueror. He makes and unmakes nations. After defeating the Picts and Scots, he conquers all Ireland, subdues Iceland, and accepts tributes from the kings of Gothland and the Orkneys. This satisfies his warlike propensities for a space of twelve years. But at last, "hearing with delight how he has become a terror to the kings of other countries, he forms a design for the conquest of all Europe." First he subdues Norway and Denmark; then he spends nine years in Gaul, during which time the whole country is reduced to his dominion; and later he holds court at Paris itself. After having distributed the chief provinces of his new realm to various chiefs in his service, he finally returns to Britain, whereupon ensues a period of great celebrations and brilliant fêtes. There is, however, Arthur recognises, danger of degeneration in times of peace; and so, when he receives the demand for tribute from the Roman procurator Lucius Tiberius, he determines, on

the advice of his counsellors, to begin warfare anew. Not only does he repudiate Lucius' demand, he even claims that tribute is justly due to him from Rome, inasmuch as his predecessors and kinsmen, Belinus and Constantine, both had gained that imperial throne. Provided with an enormous army ("all together made up 183,200, besides foot which did not easily fall under number"!), the king commits to his nephew Modred the government of Britain, and crossing the Channel, prosecutes a successful war on the Continent. When, however, he is about to pass the Alps, he has news brought him that Modred, "by tyrannical and treasonable practices, has set the crown upon his own head; and that Queen Guanhumara, in violation of her first marriage, has wickedly married him." He therefore desists from his enterprise against Rome, and returns with speed to Britain, where he encounters Modred in a bloody battle, in which, however, he gains the victory. After being twice routed, Modred is killed. But this last struggle was so fierce that it "proved fatal to almost all the commanders and their forces . . . and even the renowned King Arthur himself was mortally wounded, and being carried thence to the Isle of Avalon to be cured of his wounds, he gave up the crown of Britain to his kinsman Constantine, the son of Cador, Duke of Cornwall, in the five hundred and second year of Our Lord's incarnation."

This conclusion takes us at once into the realm of myth. The Isle of Avalon, whither Arthur is transported to be healed of his wounds, is the Celtic Otherworld of unending delight. From it, according to British fable current in Geoffrey's time, Arthur was destined to return to cast off the yoke of the oppressor from his distressed land. The story of the loss of Guinevere, and the struggle to recover her, is also without doubt the relic of an ancient myth. Thus, whatever mythological stories may be at the bottom of statements in the history are rationalised so as to appear as real occurrences. We must not, however, overlook the fact that Arthur wields at Mount

Badon a magic sword Caliburn (Excalibur), "forged in the Isle of Avalon," a spear Ron, and a shield Priwen. Welsh tradition supplied him also with a magic dagger, and ship, and a mantle that made the wearer invisible. For some reason best known to himself, Geoffrey refrained from mentioning the Round Table, also a magic property; but Wace soon after supplied that omission. In possessing such equipment, Arthur partakes of the nature of a mythological hero. He is no longer simply an historical *dux bellorum*, a Cormac, or an Alexander: he is now similar in nature to the Irish Cuchulinn, a Welsh Odin, a Celtic Mercury.

Allied to this conception is that of Arthur as an adventurous knight. He not only leads armies, he engages in single hand-to-hand combats with monsters to free endangered ladies. His fight with the giant of Mont St. Michel reads like the summary of a *roman d'aventure*, or like an incident of an episodic romance, which might have a companion in his combat with the giant Ritho, who challenged him to fight on Mount Aravius.

> This giant had made himself furs of the beards of kings he had killed, and had sent word to Arthur carefully to cut off his beard and send it to him; and then, out of respect to his preëminence over other kings, his beard should have the honour of the principal place. But if he refused to do it, he challenged him to a duel, with this offer, that the conqueror should have the furs, and also the beard of the vanquished for a trophy of his victory. In this conflict, therefore, Arthur proved victorious, and took the beard and spoils of the giant.

Given, indeed, a youthful hero like Arthur in Geoffrey's description, and such achievements as the fight with Ritho, the rescue of Helena, and the winning of a kingdom by single combat with the gigantic Flollo, followed by a coronation scene, a marriage ceremony, a banquet, and a tourney, like those so amazingly pictured by the historian, and we have all the materials necessary for a biographical romance of the ordinary type.

In Arthur's time, says Geoffrey,

Britain had arrived at such a pitch of grandeur, that in abundance of riches, luxury of ornaments, and politeness of inhabitants, it far surpassed all other kingdoms. The knights in it that were famous for feats of chivalry wore their clothes and arms all of the same colour and fashion; and the women also, no less celebrated for their wit, wore all the same kind of apparel, and esteemed none worthy of their love but such as had given a proof of their valour in three several battles. Thus was the valour of the men an encouragement to the women's chastity, and the love of the women a spur to the soldiers' bravery.

It is obvious that such a presentment as this was only possible in the time of the Norman kings. Never before had anything of the kind been known in England. We have here full-blown chivalry; the *service des dames* is the stimulus of warfare; knights strive to win honour in tourneys that they may gain the love of the weaker but dominant sex. In thus picturing the court of King Arthur as one of elaborate refinement, Geoffrey took as a model that of the Conqueror and his successors. He imitated, in a word, as was most natural, the court that was the centre of his own considerations. Arthur's wars are conducted like those of the Anglo-Norman kings; his doings in peace are fashioned on theirs.

According to the manner of his time, Geoffrey gave free rein to his fancy, and fabricated with an easy conscience what he himself knew full well was an entirely new narrative of the deeds of his hero, embodying, to be sure, much that was old and authentic, much that was based on genuine popular tradition, but nevertheless establishing an entirely different impression of Arthur from any that had prevailed before. Because of his work there was a great gulf for ever fixed between our Arthur and the hero whom Nennius lauds and the *Mabinogion* depict. Not that the *Historia* is the chief source of all the legends that cluster about the name of Arthur. Not that the romancers who afterwards narrated the deeds of his fellows found his history worthy of repetition. Far from it. The early romancers did not perpetuate Geoffrey's record of this wonderful world-figure by whose startling achievements

they were dazzled and bewildered. Arthur's reputation as an invincible monarch they readily accepted. But most of the tales of his personal valour they thought best to ignore as inconsistent with the new position he had been given. If Geoffrey thus dealt a death-blow to the personal saga of the Welsh warrior, he made possible a new Arthur; he established him for ever as an illustrious monarch with a brilliant court; he called into literary being the tales of the brave British and Armoric knights with whom (in Milton's phrase) he was "begirt."

The question now arises: If Geoffrey is not the source of the material embodied in the early Arthurian romances, whence did it come? The answer is not yet final. But that there was a vast deal of romantic tradition connected with Arthur before Geoffrey's time is now generally conceded. Not to mention the very plain evidence of Nennius and Geoffrey's own narrative, we have the testimony of William of Malmesbury, Giraldus, Wace, and many others on this point, though, even without their explicit statements that the deeds of Arthur and his knights were recounted in extravagant fable, we should regard such a situation as inevitable on the basis of antecedent probability. An examination of the proper names in mediæval Italian documents has made it certain that Arthurian stories were widely current in Italy in the eleventh and later centuries; otherwise so many historical persons could not then have borne Arthurian names. And how else could it have come about that an episode in an Arthurian story should be carved on the Cathedral of Modena as early as the beginning of the twelfth century? This extraordinary familiarity with the matter of Britain at so early a period in Italy was probably due chiefly to the influence of the French, among whom Arthur had doubtless long been celebrated in popular tales. From an account of an expedition made in 1113 by certain monks of Laon in Brittany to Cornwall, we not only learn that a Cornish cripple was ready to fight in a holy sanctuary for his belief that Arthur still lived, and are informed that there were then in

Cornwall, as there now are in all quarters in Britain, places that bore his name, but we discover also that the French and Bretons of the Continent had previously been accustomed to dispute concerning the great king.

The Celtic stories circulating on the Continent in the twelfth century were transmitted to the French in large measure no doubt by the Armorican Bretons. When in the fifth and sixth centuries they emigrated from South Wales and Cornwall, they took with them growing traditions, which soon entered upon an era of altered development. The Armoricans did not live by themselves or unto themselves. There is no sufficient reason to believe that they ever ceased to have intercourse with their kin at home; they early had much to do with the Franks; from the tenth century on they were in close intimacy with the Normans. Not only did Norman and Breton princes marry and give in marriage among themselves—their troops also fought side by side in the same battles. William the Conqueror found his Breton auxiliaries under Alan Fergant an invaluable aid, and they received their full share of lands and possessions in England after the Conquest. Stories were easily rendered accessible to the French through the medium of French-speaking Bretons, or Breton-speaking Normans. From the bilingual zone of their borderland travelled minstrels and story-tellers who were able to make themselves intelligible in either tongue. They were welcomed everywhere, at the hut of the peasant as well as in the lordly hall, and spread abroad among high and low knowledge of the glorious king of their motherland, for whose return they still hoped.

But it is unreasonable to maintain, as some do, that meanwhile the insular Celts had either forgotten Arthur or ceased to talk about him. Their minstrels too, we may be sure, sang of him and his might, even to their hereditary foes; for national prejudices do not influence much the actions of vagabond individuals who have their own ends to farther, and who speedily grow cosmopolitan when a good living is thus assured them. Whether the Saxons had heard many Arthurian stories from the people

they conquered is uncertain. Probability certainly favours it; but, at any rate after the Conquest, there was surely every occasion for the dissemination of Welsh popular tales. The conquerors showed an amazing readiness to identify themselves with the history and fortunes of their new land, even as their ancestors renounced their Northern speech when they settled in France. Many marriages, we know, took place between representatives of the two races, British and Norman, and when, as was natural, a bilingual family resulted, the British mother saw to it that her children were bountifully supplied with the fancies on which she in her youth had fed. Yet, even without this favouring condition, it is hard to imagine two large bodies of men living side by side —though they might belong to races traditionally, or indeed actually, hostile—without any social intercourse between them; and stories were eagerly listened to in early England, whatever their origin, however communicated,—by all inhabitants, Saxons, Normans, and Celts.

Another fact seems certain: music attended the royal progress of Arthur. The British minstrels charmed the senses while they enchanted the imagination of those who listened to their lays. Everywhere they carried with them their *rotes*, famous stringed instruments, on which they produced melodies that gave solace and induced content. The minstrel's song was necessarily short. The chief moments of the action in a tale were perhaps the only parts that were delivered with the accompaniment of the harp. The rest the minstrel might briefly tell for his hearers' better understanding of the theme. Having heard the "argument," they abandoned themselves to comfortable sound. In imagination they saw the scenes of the story vaguely enacted before them. They perceived what they could not repeat. But interest in the song aroused interest in the story. Inquiry soon elicited the narrative in full. And thus perhaps were disseminated in Europe the tales of British heroes, which only awaited an impulse to be extensively written down.

The most pleasing and significant form in which this matter

of Britain is preserved to us before the flourishing of romance is that of the Old French narrative lays, with which the name of Marie de France is now invariably connected. Though not, of course, the only one who composed poems of this sort, she stands preëminent among her competitors. Though born in France, she lived in England, and there was happily inspired to put into rhyme the tales of "the old courteous Britons" that reached her ears. She wisely chose to repeat rather than to invent. Her merit is that of a skilful versifier of the popular themes of the minstrels, in the presentation of which she reveals delicate refinement, good judgment, and sometimes exquisite grace. Her poems were received by her contemporaries with enthusiasm. Even from a rival poet, Denis Pyramus, we have a tribute to their popularity:

> All love them much and hold them dear,
> Baron, count, and chevalier,
> Applaud their form, and take delight
> To hear them told by day and night.
> In chief, these tales the ladies please;
> They listen glad their hearts to ease.

Though Marie's lays are largely based on British tradition, they are an elaborate product. Her work stands near the top of the ladder by which primitive ideas have gradually mounted to heights of artistic presentment. Yet even if we must seek farther back for the real fountain-head of Arthurian fiction, the lays of Britain are highly significant in tracing its development. They represent the scope and substance of the stories utilised by poets like Crestien de Troyes as the basis of their much longer and more intricate courtly poems.

Time, place, and circumstance are not significant in the so-called Breton lays. They usually relate incidents that happened once upon a time, in a land vaguely designated, of a hero or heroine with an ill-defined personality. Let the story be told of some one else, belonging to another epoch, let it be localised in a region quite remote from the first scene of the action, and the

reader hardly notices the change. The fascination of these poems, he discovers, is quite unaffected by such externals, unless it be that the scene is transferred to the court of King Arthur and the incidents ascribed to one of his knights, when the interest is appreciably increased. This means of enhancing the interest of the Breton lays and other similar stories, of enriching at the same time the supply of Arthurian fiction, of providing new material for long biographical or cyclical romances, being early recognised, it led to the grouping about the Round Table of a host of warriors before unheard-of in connection with Arthur, or in the ascription to his well-known knights of the adventures previously performed by less famous heroes. Only *Lanval* among Marie's poems is attached to Arthur, and that but superficially. But already in Crestien's *Erec*, the earliest extant Arthurian romance, we observe that the heroes of other lays, such as *Guingamor* and *Graalent*, have given up their independent existence and enlisted in his service. The time for individual knights was past when Arthur once mustered his forces. Thus only, in truth, could he have won the world. He needed the support of that great congregation of knights previously unattached, or belonging to the company of some less glorious leader, who were irresistibly drawn to him by the grandeur of his name, and whose own personal exploits shone with brighter lustre when reputed to have been performed in the service of the great king.

Romances resulted from the amplification and elaboration of these older tales. They were based on written and unwritten sources, on artistic productions and formless traditions. The romances in verse appear to have preceded those in prose, though they do not necessarily therefore embody more primitive material. Indeed, the opposite situation often confronts us: the more artistic a narrative is, the greater is the likelihood that it reveals the peculiar personality of the author, and witnesses to his power of invention. Of the French poets who have dealt with the story of King Arthur, Crestien occupies the first place both in merit and in time. And yet few reveal more hopeless misunderstandings

of the subject they handle, or explain so ill the inexplicable things one regularly encounters in Celtic myths. Crestien was, indeed, a poet of great talent, and his works have genuine charm. He stood head and shoulders above most of his contemporaries, justly estimated by them, and by others later, as the greatest master of poetic form whom France had up to this time produced. His poems, which were all composed within the second half of the twelfth century, will be discussed in their places. Suffice it to say here that we probably owe to Crestien more than to any one else the refined, chivalrous tone of the Arthurian tales. By him they were more than ever before impregnated with the Provençal ideas that dominated society in the time of Henry II., whose queen, Eleanor of Poitou, seems to have eagerly propagated them in the north. The old stories that he found ready at hand Crestien used as vehicles of tender sentiment and beautiful description. He pictured in them the brilliant life at the court of Champagne, where he dwelt high in the favour of the Countess Marie. He lingers gladly over banquets and tournaments, and describes with fond care the costumes of ladies and the armour of knights; but above all he loves to analyse the emotions of his characters when in perplexing positions, and to study their shifting states of mind. His works are throughout distinguished by grace and lucidity of style, qualities that mark him as essentially French. And though he has little sense for mystery and illusion, and therefore often fails to catch the spirit of the Arthurian matter of which he treats, he nevertheless brought it into exalted prominence, and made it popular among the highest classes at home and abroad. In France he had many imitators, some of them of high station; for example, the knight Renaud de Beaujeu, who in his charming poem *Le Bel Inconnu* borrowed from him with easy-going freedom. Crestien's works, moreover, exerted a mighty influence in foreign lands. In Germany appeared the excellent translations of *Erec* and *Ivain* by Hartmann von Aue; and Wolfram von Eschenbach's great poem *Parzival* is closely connected with the *Conte del Graal*. As we shall see later,

some of his poems were also reproduced in English and Norse. Even the Welsh tales of *Peredur*, *Owain*, and *Gheraint*, preserved in the Red Book of Hergest, are thought by many to be nothing but free translations from Crestien's French.

The *réclame* that Geoffrey won by his history, and Marie and Crestien by their poems, occasioned the literary treatment of a large number of floating tales that would otherwise have had no more than a transient existence. Many of these were sooner or later given artistic metrical form. But more were embodied in the prose romances of the end of the twelfth and the thirteenth century, which, though in some measure based on the earlier ones in verse, were still by no means drawn only from that source of supply, but were rather the result of accumulations from every quarter, the harvest in particular of the rich fields of oral tradition. It is no wonder that they are frequently at variance with themselves, that they often present gross inconsistencies, and are not seldom wretchedly confused. The compilers obviously gathered their material with too great eagerness and too little discrimination. They joined together matter of every sort, and produced a whole that is not a whole, an unconnected series of events that could be altered here and there, and everywhere without disconcerting the reader, and can therefore lay no claim to the merit of well-considered design. Yet in the huge mosaic we find now and then embedded sections of singular beauty, in most cases not the compiler's work. Any one who reads the great prose collections of Arthurian tales without knowing how they were composed, or the purpose they were meant to serve as anthologies of romantic folklore, will no doubt denounce them as long-winded and dull. But it is manifestly unfair to judge such compilations after a continuous reading for which they were not intended. These straggling compositions of a people with much unoccupied leisure were not meant for hasty absorbing and rapid forgetting. On the contrary, they were generally read aloud in bower or hall, by one practised in the art, from manuscripts beautiful and rare. Only a few episodes

were lived through by the assembly at each meeting; and the transition from the deeds of one warrior to those of his fellow was not so abrupt as it appears when the stories follow one another, seemingly without beginning or end, on the same sullen page. Like the humble audiences at an Italian marionette show to-day, who gather night after night to see Charlemagne and his paladins in lifelike array doing various deeds of valour, men and women of all classes assembled in the Middle Ages to listen to the exploits of Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. The reciter might stop here or there according to the exigencies of the occasion, but he probably never continued long enough to betray the sameness of the adventures or the prolixity of the plot.

A prose romance, then, should be regarded simply as a pot-pourri of popular themes. The position of the episodes with respect to one another, the interrelation of the incidents, is purely arbitrary. On the principle that to him that hath shall be given, were transferred to the chief heroes adventures of others less known to fame. New aggregations of romantic stars now appear together on the same stage. Each is given a chance to shine as long as he is likely to please, and each appears regularly in the parts that suit him best. In early times Perceval, and particularly Gawain, were by all odds the favourite figures. But later Merlin, Tristram, and Lancelot became the most popular in France. Arthur in the prose and even in the metrical romances appears everywhere rather as looker-on than as participant. His court is simply the general rendezvous of his adventurous knights. Ever young and strong, to be sure, but still content to leave achievement to others, he lives serenely among his companions at the head of his noble order of the Round Table, until, in course of time, that ancient foundation perishes and he is mysteriously transported to the Otherworld.

The abiding influence of the matter of Britain does not consist so much in its form as in its spirit. The Breton tales will always live because they can never cease to fascinate and

bespell. By their very unreality they enthrall our modern minds. Like the knights of old, we too are charmed by Otherworld illusions, beguiled by ethereal beauty, entranced by unearthly melody. We too love

> The forest and enchantments drear,
> Where more is meant than meets the ear.

We too delight to look from

> Charm'd magic casements opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.

The *lande aventureuse* is irresistible in its appeal.

Such joys as these the matter of Britain alone affords. Search where one will in the narrative literature of the world, in Orient or Occident, and there is nothing like Arthurian romance. It is the glory of the Celtic race that originated it, the French that gave it shape, the English that adopted it as their own. We are both grateful and proud that

> The mightiest chiefs of English song
> Scorned not these legends to prolong.

It remains for us yet to follow in detail the extant English poems embodying this matter of Britain. We shall begin with the English lays, and examine afterwards all the works treating of Tristram, Gawain, Guinglain, Ywain, Perceval, Lancelot, the Quest of the Holy Grail, Merlin, and the Death of Arthur, following the history of each cycle from its first appearance in poetry to its final form in prose, from the era of the Norman Conquest to the time of Elizabeth.

The Breton Lays in English

> Thise olde gentil Britons in hir dayes
> Of diverse aventures maden layes,
> Rymeyed in hir firste Briton tonge;
> Which layes with hir instruments they songe,

Or elles redden him for hir plesaunce ;
And oon of hem have I in remembraunce,
Which I shal seyn with good wil as I can.

So Chaucer introduces the charming lay of Arviragus and Dorigen. Into the mouth of the Franklin, who plainly aspired to associate with gentlefolk, he puts a tale which was well calculated to please those of refined taste. The Breton lays, in truth, differed from other types of mediæval literature, such as the fabliaux, in being exclusively intended for the chivalric classes. As early as the end of the twelfth century we find a chronicler distinguishing between *aventurae nobilium* and *fabellae ignobilium*, and the distinction was justified by the different public for whom they were prepared, as well as by reason of their unlike origin. In England for two hundred years after the Conquest literature had been cultivated chiefly by the upper classes of Anglo-Norman society, and during this period the Old French narrative lays had enjoyed a never-waning popularity. Only one, the *Lai du Cor* of Robert Biquet, preserved in a unique manuscript in the Bodleian Library, is clearly the work of ar Anglo-Norman ; but we have other evidence of their currency in the island.

In the British Museum is treasured a beautiful manuscript (Harleian 798) containing in their best form the lays of Marie de France, together with the unique prologue, from which we learn what little we know of the author's personality. This very important manuscript was written in England in the second half of the thirteenth century ; and another containing *Lanval*, of slightly later date, betrays the same origin. Thus it is clear that a century after their production Marie's poems were still popular in the land where they were written, enjoyed by the descendants of the English king (Henry II.) to whom they were dedicated. From England, moreover, they seem to have spread to neighbouring lands. It is, at all events, generally assumed that thence they were carried, with much other romantic material, to Norway, where they were translated into Old Norse prose at the com-

mand of Hákon Hákonsson, king of that land from 1217 to 1263.

In English we have eight Breton lays that appear to be genuine. The Auchinleck MS. contains three—*Le Freine*, *Sir Orfeo*, and *Sir Degare*. *Lanval* was doubtless translated about the same time, though only preserved in late disfigured forms (*e.g. Sir Lamwell* in the Percy Folio MS.), while the other poems that claim to be based on lays, namely, *Emare*, *Sir Gowghter*, *The Earl of Tolouse*, and Chaucer's Franklin's Tale, all date from the second half of the fourteenth century or a trifle later. Nor was it long after 1350 that Thomas Chestre, amplifying the earlier English translation of Marie's lay, produced in his *Sir Launfal* a poem of still greater charm.

These lays have never before been examined together in a work of this kind; but there are obvious advantages in the grouping: when brought into association, they are found to throw light on one another as well as on the romances to be later studied, which, as we have seen, are but an outgrowth of tales similar in scope and substance, if not so finished in form. It is, indeed, very striking how historians of English literature, who have made no clear distinctions between the products of romance in its different stages of development, have one and all commented on the charm of these English poems, praising particularly their freedom from dull diffuseness. They have not generally understood that the good qualities of most are due to the form in which the matter reached their authors, and not to the artistic insight of the English writers themselves. The fact is that the interest of the anonymous productions consists not so much in the revelation of poets of high order, who treated their material with such skill as to avoid the tediousness of the stereotyped romance, as in the fact that the common people of England were through them enabled to drink from the fountain-head of pure tradition, that those who could not understand French were at last put into a position to enjoy the stories of Britain in their most embellished poetic form. This was a matter of no small consequence. The

old stories never would have fallen into disrepute, nor would the romances which embody them ever have been sneered at, had they preserved the simplicity that the best English lays exhibit. When, however, they were put into jingling metre with meaningless "tails," told in purely conventional phraseology, padded with commonplace descriptions, and extended by distracting digressions —then was the time to protest; and Chaucer's ridicule was timely and deserved. It is folly, however, to ignore all the wealth of poetic material in early England because in its latest forms it was stupidly presented in such a style as to invite ridicule. We cannot lightly free ourselves from the obligation to enter upon difficult fields of inquiry because *Sir Thopas* was written. Chaucer's parody only makes the obligation greater; for it reveals better than anything else in what atmosphere he lived, and what were the poetic conceptions that he found broadcast in the land.

In only two cases (*Lamwell*, *Freine*), it may be said, have we the French originals of the English lays. These two simple translations are in the regular octosyllabic couplet of Marie—a metre found in only two others (*Sir Orfeo* and *Sir Degare*), which it is perhaps safe to regard as representing their originals with fair exactness. *Sir Launfal* shows us how the simple metre was discarded in amplification and the tail-rhyme strophe employed instead. The change of metre was accompanied, in this case at least, by great change in spirit and matter. The student will therefore be on his guard against regarding *Emare*, *The Earl of Tolouse*, and *Sir Gowghter* as faithful reproductions of the twelfth-century French poems on which they profess to be based. The Franklin's Tale is in couplets, not strophes, and has only such interpolations as are regular in Chaucer's work. We may therefore accept it more confidently as indicating in some degree the form of its lost original.

In a very interesting passage, which introduces two of the English lays, we are told the "ferli" things of which "lays that be in harping" treat:

Some be of weal and some of woe,
Some of joy and mirth also,
And some of treachery and of guile,
Of old adventures that fell while ;
And some of bourds and ribaldry,
And many there be of faery ;
Of all things that man see
Most of love forsooth they be.

In English we have, as will presently appear, an example of nearly every class. None, however, are more characteristic than those in which love and faery are combined ; and of them perhaps the best is *Lanval*, of which mention has already more than once been made.

This is genuine tale of faery, peculiarly Celtic in origin and character. The heroine is one of those beautiful, all-powerful denizens of the Otherworld who seek the love of a mortal youth and lavish upon him their bounty without stint or stay.

One day, distressed by the loss of his possessions, Lanval is musing alone by a river's side when two maidens approach and conduct him to their mistress, lying luxuriously in a splendid pavilion near by. She grants the knight her love, gives him rich gifts, and promises to be with him later whenever he desires, imposing but a single condition, that he make no boast of her to any one. He lives for a time supremely happy in his new-found joy, but unfortunately one day in an unguarded moment he forgets the restriction his *amie* has imposed upon him, and boasts of her to the queen, who, like Potiphar's wife, has offered him her love. In so doing he forfeits his happiness, for he speedily discovers that the fay, true to her word, no longer heeds his desires. The queen having accused him of insulting her, Lanval is sentenced to death unless he can prove the truth of his assertions concerning his beloved's beauty. His anguish at being separated from her is keen, but his prayers are of no avail. Not until the last moment of respite approaches does the fay appear. Then in all the stateliness of regal magnificence, preceded by two pairs of matchless maidens, she comes riding on a snow-white horse to Arthur's court, dazzles the eyes of the bewildered assembly, denounces the vicious queen, and obtains her lover's release. Thereupon she departs to the Isle of Avalon, whither Lanval accompanies her to dwell for ever in joy.

In Chestre's elaboration the final departure of the fay from

the court is more graphically described than in Marie, and in it are some interesting bits of popular tradition. Here Launfal does not lightly regain his lady's love, even after her return. She pays no attention to his persistent pleadings, and when together they reach the river on the other side of which lies her mysterious domain, she passes over, still unforgiving. But the knight does not even then desist. Despairingly he plunges in, loses his horse, and is about to drown, when at last the fay relenting helps him ashore, and lets him accompany her to her blissful land, where was nought to annoy. Launfal's steed, like Cuchulinn's, exceeding disconsolate, lamented the loss of his master; but once a year, it was said, they appeared together on a certain day, ready to joust with any one who wished an encounter.

Chestre thus proceeded in a spirit of independent authorship to refashion and expand the older translation of Marie's lay. As a result, he produced a poem on the whole consistent and harmonious, told with ease and charm. We know nothing whatever of his personality; and the ascription to him of other poems (*Octavian* and *Libeaus Desconus*), likewise produced in Kent about the same time, rests upon insufficient evidence.

In Celtic tradition there were kings as well as queens of the Otherworld, and they too were known to cast loving eyes on mortals. In *Sir Orfeo* we have an unusually happy embodiment of this conception in a story where it had originally no place. In the hands of a clever poet the ancient tale of Orpheus and Eurydice became a genuine lay of Britain, not simply because it was fashioned by him in the same metre and style as the lays on native themes, but because he transformed it in spirit throughout to accord with British notions of fairyland.

Queen Heurodys one May morning falls asleep under a tree in her garden. She sleeps uncommonly long, but her maidens dare not disturb her. When finally she awakes, she acts as if possessed. The king is summoned to her chamber and learns from her the cause of her grief and disorder. While apparently asleep under the tree, she has in truth been carried off by a king

with a great following of gentle knights to a palace of amazing magnificence. He has brought her back again to the garden, but only to give her a chance to bid farewell; on the morrow he will return to take her away to live with him forever. King Orfeo, determined to prevent her abduction, stations about the tree the next day hundreds of knights, but nevertheless the queen is "twitched" away, and none know what has become of her. Her husband, in despair, immediately gives over his realm to the charge of his steward, and betakes himself to the woods, harp in hand. For ten years he lives a rough, solitary life; when one day he recognises Heurodys among many ladies proceeding through the wood. She too recognises him but cannot address him, and is hurried off by her companions, who ride through a rock into fairyland. Orfeo follows eagerly until he reaches a "fair country, as bright as sun on a summer's day, smooth and plain and all green." In the midst of the plain rises a lofty castle with a hundred towers. Its walls shine like crystal; its worst pillar is of burnished gold; the rich stones it displays give light to the land; it seems like "the proud court of Paradise." The porter deigns to admit Orfeo because he is a minstrel. Wonder many folk he sees in all sorts of positions, among them his wife, all "with faery thither come." Beside the king sits a queen with clothes so rich that Orfeo's eyes can scarce bear the sight. Down he kneels before the king, and begs a hearing. He makes music so charming that the monarch grants him in advance whatever boon he may ask. Orfeo demands Heurodys, "lovesome without lack," and though reluctantly, the king assents. Back the minstrel leads her to his land, where, however, he at first conceals his identity in order the better to test his steward. Finding him faithful, he reveals himself, and there is great joy among his men. A new coronation takes place, and Orfeo and Heurodys live on in the land in peace to the end of their days.

> Harpers in Britain after than
> Heard how this marvel began,
> And made thereof a lay of good liking,
> And named it after the king:
> That lay Orfeo is y-hote,
> Good is the lay; sweet is the note.

From Hades, evidently, the scene of the old classical story has been transferred to fairyland; the king of the Celtic Otherworld is substituted for Pluto. References in Chaucer's Merchant's Tale to "Pluto, that is king of fayerye," and in Dunbar's *Golden Targe* to "Pluto, the elrich incubus, in cloak of green," attest the familiarity of the mediæval English and Scotch with this new conception of the lord of the dead.

Certain other classical stories (*e.g.* Pyramus and Thisbe, and Narcissus) were dealt with in Old French poems sometimes called lays; but no one of them presents the peculiar situation in *Orfeo*, where the Celtic spirit has quite dispossessed the ancient and permeated the whole account.

The French lay of Orpheus, from which *Orfeo* is translated, is now lost; but we have references enough to it in other works to establish its previous existence. One, in the French prose romance of Lancelot, is of unusual interest. King Bademagus, we read, "was seated in an arm-chair of ivory, which was very beautiful, and before him was a harper who played (*notoit*) the lay of Orpheus; and it pleased the king so much to listen that there was no one who dared say a word."

In an extensive group of Breton lays on a kindred theme, the principal motive is the begetting of a youth of unusual prowess by a mysterious prince of the Otherworld who makes love to a mortal lady. To this group belong the Old French *Tydorel*, *Milun*, and *Doon*; the English *Sir Degare* and *Sir Gowghter*. The foundation of these stories in fairy lore, to be sure, does not appear at once to the superficial reader, but soon becomes evident to one familiar with the ways of romance. For three changes, he is aware, are apt to take place—nay, almost inevitably do take place—in the gradual modernising of the characters in mythical tales: they are rationalised, humanised, and christianised, at advancing stages in their development. It is not in place here to trace the process, nor to show the connections of these poems with one another, nor even to establish the view that the English works are justly called Breton lays. It will suffice to indicate of what they treat. Regarding *Sir Degare*, it may be said, first, that, though written about 1300, it was popular enough as late as the sixteenth century to appear then in no less than three black-letter editions. The hero's name should properly be written *Egare* (meaning, as the poet explains, "almost lost"), the *D* being the French preposition that got attached to it in England. Though not so charming as *Sir Orfeo*, the poem is

one of distinct merit, and is written in a simple and straightforward style.

One day (her mother's memorial day) a princess of Little Britain, famed for her gentleness and beauty, lingers in a forest near an abbey where the king is dispensing charity. While her companions sleep, a handsome "fairy knight," clad in a robe of scarlet, appears and proffers his love. She is unable to resist his charm. Before his departure, he predicts that she shall bear a famous son, and leaves her a pointless sword to be given the boy, as a means of their later recognition. When the child is born, the young mother determines to "expose" him, but provides for his upbringing by whatever charitable person shall chance to find his lonely cradle. In it, together with a sum of gold, she places a pair of magic gloves, "that her lemman had sent from fairyland," which will go on no hands but hers, also a letter tied by a silken thread to the boy's neck, explaining that he is of gentle blood, and instructing him to marry no one whose hands they will not fit. A hermit discovers the child and takes charge of him. He christens him Degare because of his forlorn state, and educates him until he is grown up. Then the boy departs, with the gloves in his possession, performs deeds of valour, and wins renown.

Now the king has issued a decree that the princess shall be given only to the man who could unhorse her father; and of this Degare learns. He promptly undertakes, and succeeds in, the encounter. His mother swoons when, almost too late, he produces the gloves and bids her try them on. She confesses all, and the boy straightway sets out, with the sword she has long treasured, to discover his father. While journeying, he comes to a mysterious castle, falls in love with its winsome mistress, and slays her hated suitor, but leaves her for a twelvemonth to continue his search. In the end he meets his father, and engages with him in combat, but is recognised by his sword, and the two rejoice. Father and mother are brought together again in happy union, and Degare weds the lady he has freed.

Sir Gowghter is similarly begotten by an elfin knight, who appears to a lady in the likeness of her husband as she rests in an orchard. According to the story as we have it, when he has had his way with her, he reveals himself as a fiend, and predicts that his child, though very strong and fair, will be fearfully savage and cruel. So it turns out. The boy, whom the mother carries off to a lonely retreat when her husband dies, grows up wild and uncontrollable, and causes all whom he meets to mourn. At last he is by chance made to suspect his unnatural

origin, wrings a confession from his mother, and sets out for Rome to expiate his crimes. The Pope imposes upon him these conditions, that he shall eat no food except what he takes from a dog's mouth, and that he shall speak no word for good or ill—until he shall have a token from God that his sins are forgiven. He journeys forth to fulfil his fate, and acts with such virtue that he wins the approval of Heaven, and secures the hand of an earl's daughter. He marries her joyfully; and bestows the earl on his mother. In gratitude for his conversion from his devil-nature, and happy success, he builds a fine abbey for black monks.

The most striking feature of Sir Gowghter's stay at the earl's castle is his procedure in a three days' tournament, by means of which he reveals his peculiar prowess, and rescues the princess from her giant-suitor, who threatens to lay waste her lands. Each day he appears differently accoutred, in black, red, and milk-white armour, on steeds of corresponding colour—this equipment having been mysteriously provided for him in answer to his prayer (originally, no doubt, by fairy resource)—conquers all his opponents, and escapes unknown. Each time the hero is supposed, by all but the princess, to have avoided the battle, and he performs his menial service as if nothing had happened. Great is the surprise when it appears that he is the victor in each conflict; but all declare him worthy of his reward. This episode is of frequent occurrence in popular tales, and appears in other romances, such as *Ypomedon*, *Lancelot*, and *Roswell and Lillian*, dating, in French, English, and Scottish, from the twelfth to the fifteenth century.

Sir Gowghter is most noticeably akin to two other heroes. In the English poem, a redaction of a much simpler lay, he has taken on the semblance of the celebrated Robert the Devil, whose early malodorous exploits, due to his demonic origin, and whose strange conversion to an upright Christian, are recorded in two late English romances. The early redaction represented him, moreover, as the half-brother of Merlin. And naturally

enough so, for the nature of their begetting was the same: Merlin's conception was also explained as due to a devil's wiles.

> And, sooth, men say that he was not the sonne
> Of mortal syre or other living wight,
> But wondrously begotten, and begonne
> By false illusion of a guilefull spright
> On a faire lady nonne.
>
> *Faërie Queene*, III. iii. 13.

The "beautiful young man" who came to Merlin's mother, the king's daughter of Dimetia, must have been, as the wise men made clear to Vortiger, an "incubus." "These are of the nature partly of men and partly of angels, and whenever they please assume human shapes and lie with women." It would seem that the incubus theory persisted as a convenient (tongue-in-the-cheek) explanation of why other nuns and unmarried folk had children. Judge to the contrary who will, after reading Chaucer's words in the prologue to the Wife of Bath's Tale:

> For ther as wont to walken was an elf,
> Ther walketh now the limitour himself . . .
> Wommen may go saufly up and doun;
> In every bush, or under every tree,
> Ther is noon other incubus but he,
> And he ne wol doon hem non dishonour.

The offspring of marriages between mortals and immortals were invariably remarkable. In truth, most heroes of ancient romance were born as the fruit of a love-attachment in which at least one of the parties was originally represented as of supernatural origin. The lays last treated pass briefly over the relations between the lovers to describe the achievements of their progeny. We have, however, others that deal with the way in which these relations were established and pursued.

Emare is a good example of a Breton tale so rationalised and so overlaid with extraneous matter that its original meaning is almost completely hidden. It too has been christianised,

but not thereby profoundly changed, like *Sir Gowghter*. Real confusion, however, has been caused by the author's efforts to humanise an Otherworld being, to represent as natural a situation in reality quite unreasonable unless we understand its basis in myth. If we eliminate certain repetitions, which detract from the merit of the lay, its substance may be thus briefly narrated:

Sir Cador, a knight of Wales, one day sees from his castle a mysterious boat approach. Hastening to the shore, he discovers that it is occupied only by a lovely maiden. He is so overcome by her beauty that, although he knows nothing of her origin, he at once marries her. The two live in all happiness together until the knight goes on an expedition to help the king of France in war. In his absence, by the evil contrivance of her mother-in-law, his wife is falsely accused, and set adrift in a boat, which takes her to Rome. There she dwells long with a rich man who finds her by the shore. She wins the hearts of all. Meanwhile, her husband, who was nearly frantic when he learned of his wife's cruel treatment, has lived "with full heavy cheer," until at last he sets sail for Rome to get penance. "Through the grace of God in throne," he is led to the fair lady's dwelling. Somehow aware of his coming, she tells her son how to behave in his father's presence. The boy reminds the knight of his own child, and when he is conducted to the mother, he recognises in her Emare, his long-lost wife. The two are united with great joy.

Marie's lay of *Guigemar* is also fundamentally a tale of the same class. In it, too, an unmanned boat carries a solitary lamenting passenger safely to predestined places without any consideration of sustenance on the journey. Here also one of a loving couple, set adrift because of the jealousy of a relative, is carried away from the other. Their separation lasts for a long time, during which both are in sorrow. But finally the lover is led to the place whither his lady has been driven by the waves, and recovers her with rejoicing.

Emare, it should be noted, is a creature of no ordinary type. She is always described as of unearthly beauty; her costume is of incomparable richness; her bearing is of amazing nobility, distinction, and charm. In one place, for example, we read of her husband:

The cloth on her shone so bright
He was afraid of that sight,
For glistening of that weed ;
And in his heart he thought aright
That she was no earthly wight,
He saw never none such in leed (on earth).

It was because she was "no earthly thing" that the knight's mother objected to her son's marrying her. She declared that she had never seen any one half so "gay,"

And said, "Son, this is a fiend
In this worthy weed;
As thou lovest my blessing,
Make thou never this wedding,
Christ it thee forbid."

To *Emare* we have evidently a very close parallel in the famous tale of the calumniated Constance, told by Chaucer and Gower. Both poets, as it happened, got their version from Trivet's Anglo-French chronicle, where the story appears much elaborated by a Christian redactor. Yet Constance too is clearly in origin a fay. Like Emare, she also is of such extraordinary beauty that "alle hir loven that loken on hir face." Her mother-in-law's objection to her was that she was "a strange creature"—

an elf, by aventure
Y-come, by charmes or by sorcerye.

It is the same magic "stereless" boat that carries her on the sea, both times when she is set adrift, to the places where she should go. The course of the story indeed is, in general, identical. We may note that no matter how much effort is made to connect the story with Rome and the Orient, its original localisation in Britain still persists: the boat carries Constance to a castle on the shore of Northumberland, Emare to a similar place in Galicia.

Kings or queens of the Otherworld, when they entered into relations with mortals, established a sort of taboo. There was

always a question that must not be asked, a revelation that must not be made. Violation of the command meant the separation of the lovers. It was because the forbidden was done that Lohengrin left the unhappy Elsa, that Mélusine departed from the house of her lord. If Emare and Constance were separated from their husbands, it may have been in the beginning because the latter had disobeyed their ladies' commands, as when Lanval boasted of his love, or Guingamor ate of the apple in the land of mortals; but in the poems before us the separation is explained as due to the cruel machinations of a jealous mother-in-law.

Similar in fundamental conception to these tales is the lay of *Le Freine*, a rather free, but on the whole felicitous translation of Marie's lay of the same name.

It deals with the adventures of a maiden, who, having been "exposed" at the command of her cruel mother, is discovered in a hollow ash near a convent, and brought up there, ignorant of her parentage, simply called "The Ash." A great lord of the neighbourhood falls in love with her at first sight, because of her uncommon beauty, and conducts her to his castle secretly. She lives long with him as his mistress, and gains the love and admiration of all the courtly household. But the lord's retainers are impatient to have him get legitimate heirs, and, though unwillingly, he is forced to yield to their demands. When he tells her of his intention, she accepts her humiliation with quiet dignity, without a murmur of reproach, and shows herself so gracious and amiable to the new wife at the wedding-feast that all marvel who see her. As fate will have it, however, her temporary misfortune is the cause of a happy revelation that brings her joy. When she was first carried away at dead of night and deposited in the ash, she was wrapped in a costly mantle, and a splendid gold ring was placed in her cradle. These treasures have ever since been preserved: they were the only things the maiden brought to the castle. Thinking the more to honour the bride, The Ash throws the mantle over the marriage bed. When the bride's mother enters the chamber, she at once recognises the rich cloth, and confesses all. The lord rejoices, for now The Ash is discovered to be a person of sufficiently noble birth for him to marry. She is re-established with increased honour and love in his court, and as his legitimate wife receives the glad homage of his retainers.

This charming story at once reminds us of the Clerk's tale of Griselda, though there we find no such induction as that in the

lay, Griselda being represented as the real daughter of a peasant who lived near the lord's castle. The marquis saw her, we learn, "as he rode par aventure," and was at once struck by her charm. So later, when his followers earnestly beg him to marry, he chooses her as his bride. He comes to her unexpectedly, avows his love, has his offer humbly accepted, gives her rich apparel in which to array herself, and conducts her to his dwelling. Then we are told what we might have expected: "Unnethe the peple hir knewe for hir fairnesse." She was so uncommonly beautiful and virtuous that she seemed to have been "norished in an emperoures halle"; she became "so dere and worshipful" to every wight that they concluded she could not be the daughter of the peasant, but "another creature." It is evident that in the more primitive tale Griselda, like The Ash, was only the foster-child of the poor people who brought her up. This situation was ignored by the redactors of the story that Chaucer utilised, who wished to inculcate by it moral lessons, to show not only the virtue of patience, but also that

> children ofte been
> Unlyk her worthy elders hem bifore;
> Bountee comth al of God, not of the streen
> Of which they been engendred and y-bore.

Chaucer, of course, was not the one responsible for the transformation of Griselda. He simply followed Petrarch, who in his turn borrowed from Boccaccio. The popular tale they revised had long before been adapted to natural conditions that it might intelligibly be moralised. We shall have occasion later to discuss Chaucer's poem. Here it is well to remark that Griselda is not a being of his or the Italian poet's creation, but simply the descendant of an ancient type of supernatural woman, who has become gradually humanised, and to some extent individualised. In reality, she was only an abstraction, whom even Chaucer, with all his powers of vitalisation, has not been able to endow with human life.

Relations of love between mortals and immortals were explained, in late remodellings of tradition, naturally, as the result of fortuitous circumstances. Every fay or swan-maiden was given an ancestry, and all sorts of devices were used to explain her separation from her parents, the lonely condition in which she was usually found by adventurous lords of high estate. Emare, like the wife of Offa the First, had fled from her father, who wished her to disobey the laws of Holy Church; Constance was set adrift by heathen, who objected to her missionary efforts; Degare was carried to the cell of a hermit in order that the illicit love of his mother should not be revealed; in *Le Freine* there is utilised for this purpose one of the most widespread ideas of popular belief, that the birth of more than one child at a time is a sign of adultery on the part of the mother. In the lay, the duchess, herself pregnant, accuses a friend who has brought forth twins of having had intercourse with two men. When afterwards she herself gives birth to twins, she determines to have one of them exposed. Thus was readily explained the beauty and high breeding of the solitary maiden.

We have seen that of the Canterbury pilgrims the Man of Law and the Clerk told tales of which we have versions or parallels in Breton lays, though the direct sources on which they relied were not in that form. Their fellow-traveller, the Franklin, however, based his tale, as he himself explains, on a lay of Britain. There is every reason to accept the poet's assertion regarding his source: he had almost certainly a definite French lay before him, which he followed in all the essentials of his narrative, though, as was his wont, he introduced digressions of considerable extent.

Geoffrey of Monmouth, for his life of his early British King Arviragus, whom he represents as the son of Cymbeline, seems to have utilised a popular story of a hero of that name current in South Wales. This story, of which we have an echo merely in the *Historia*, probably exalted the happy marriage of Arviragus with his beautiful and virtuous wife. On it was apparently

based a Breton lay, written by a Frenchman on the Continent. Though relying on Celtic tradition in the main, the author seems also to have utilised a tale of unlike origin, such as is to be found in the *Decameron* (x. 5). He wrote in the same style and spirit as Marie de France. Her lays in several instances present interesting parallels to Chaucer's poem not only in situation, but also in expressions of courtly sentiment.

Arviragus is very happily married to Dorigen, who loves him with all devotion. While he is absent at war in England, she, lonely and downcast, is importuned by an ardent squire, Aurelius, who begs her to grant him her love, else he shall die. To rid herself of him without unnecessary offence, she promises to do as he requests on condition that he perform a seemingly impossible task, namely, remove all the rocks on the Breton coast. Despairingly he languishes for a time, but then seeks the aid of a magician, who by illusion makes it appear that he has achieved this marvel. Thereupon Aurelius demands of Dorigen the fulfilment of her promise. She in her distress tells everything to her husband, who, with great consideration and a high sense of honour, bids her keep her plighted troth. When Aurelius learns this, he is so impressed by the magnanimity of Arviragus, and the high-mindedness of his wife, that he frees her at once from the obligations she is burdened with, and sends her back to her husband in joy. The magician, hearing of the squire's disappointment, renounces all claim to his promised reward, and thus proves himself not unworthy of his generous associate. The tale ends with the question : " Which was the moste free (liberal), as thynketh you ? "

The Celtic features of the tale appear particularly in the names of persons and places, in the style and the spirit of the narrative, and in its likeness to other traditional tales current among the Celts, based on the idea that a promise, even of the rashest sort, must needs be fulfilled. The magician especially resembles Merlin, who also was able by his magic to raise castles of ethereal beauty, filled with knights and ladies dancing and revelling on a pleasant sward, and could make them vanish at his bidding in the twinkling of an eye. He it was also who is represented by Geoffrey as transporting by magic enormous rocks from Ireland to build the celebrated Giant's Dance or Stonehenge, thus serving the British king Aurelius in his trouble. The alien element in the Breton lay consists mainly in the

discussion as to the comparative generosity of the husband, the lover, and the magician.

The Lay of Arviragus exalted above all else the virtue of "truth" (troth) as "the hyeste thing that man may kepe." This idea is likewise prominent in another English poem of the present group, *The Earl of Tolouse.*

The Empress of Almayn is an exceedingly beautiful woman, of whom the valiant Earl Barnard of Tolouse has become enamoured, albeit he is the Emperor's enemy. A knight of the lady's company undertakes for a consideration to get him secretly a near view of her, but treacherously betrays the plan to the Empress, suggesting that so favourable an opportunity to slay him be not let pass. The noble lady, however, repudiates such deceit, and insists that he shall "fulfil his covenant." In hermit's garb, the earl is taken to the chapel, where she appears in all her beauty. The knight had never seen a sight that "raised his heart so high." The hermit asks alms of her, and she gives him forty florins together with a ring she herself wore. He discovers the latter with rejoicing, and cherishes it in the hope of using it later as a token between him and his "dear darling." His traitorous friend has him set upon on his way home; but the earl slays his three opponents, escapes from the crowd that gathers to pursue him, and arrives safely at his own castle. Not only does the Empress insist that her follower hold his troth to the earl, she herself is equally faithful to her covenant with her lord. She refuses bluntly the advances of two knights who one after the other confess their love for her, declaring that they should be hanged had she not promised before they spoke to keep secret what they said. This she does even when a word from her would have saved her from grievous reproach and even death. The two knights, fearing betrayal, accuse her of adultery, making out a plausible case by slaying in her chamber a youth they have induced to hide there on the false pretence of giving pleasure to the lady whom he and all the household loved. The Emperor, absent at this time, dreams an uncanny dream, and hastens back. He is ready to slay himself for grief when he hears the report. A council assembled is about to condemn the Empress to death; but at the suggestion of a cautious old knight who suspects treason, all assent to give her a chance to obtain a champion. News of the lady's distress reaches the Earl of Tolouse. In companionship with a merchant he goes to her land, where he stays with an abbot a mile from her castle. The holy man assures him of the lady's innocence, and he agrees to defend her if he get the same assurance from her own lips. So, on the day appointed for the ordeal, he approaches in monk's weeds, and she confesses to him also, saying that her only offence consisted in giving a ring

to the Earl of Tolouse. The latter vindicates her honour ; and the accusers are burned in the fire intended for her. The Emperor sends after Barnard, who has slipped away, promising to do him no harm. The two warriors become friends, and after the Emperor's death, the Earl of Tolouse weds his lady-love and lives long with her in bliss.

The sources of this story are peculiarly puzzling. The author implies that he combined "a lay of Britain" and a "gest chronicled," and this a careful examination shows to be the case. The lay contained motives similar to those that appear in the Tristram stories; the "gest chronicled" concerned an actual Barnard, Count of Tolouse, who was accused in 830 of too great intimacy with the Empress Judith, second wife of Louis le Débonnair. But both parts had been complicated in growth by the intermixture of folklore and legendary elements widespread in Europe. The development of this story, had we space to follow it, would show how inextricably entangled historical and romantic themes become in the course of centuries when once there seems reason, or simply occasion, for their uniting. Into mediæval chronicles legend inevitably crept, and it would be to the profit of historians to realise how manifold are the romantic episodes that were accepted as real events in the unscientific Middle Age. Moreover, though it is hard to determine precisely, it is difficult to overestimate the important influence of romance, whether wholly or but partially credited, upon the minds of men to whom it was daily food. The history of social institutions cannot be satisfactorily traced without some understanding of the legendary, as well as the actual, world in which men dwelt.

Finally, in this connection should be mentioned a parallel in theme to Biquet's *Lai du Cor*, namely, the spirited ballad of *The Boy and the Mantle*, more nearly akin to the so-called fabliau of the *Mantel Mautaillé*.

King Arthur and his court are assembled at Carlisle, when a youth appears and makes respectful salutations. He then produces a mantle which he offers to the king, saying that it will never fit any lady that has once done amiss. Queen Guinevere puts it on ; but immediately it was as if torn to

shreds and became all colours. She throws it off in a fury, and retires to her room. Kay summons his lady and bids her try; but she fares hardly better, for she is left half-naked, and all the men enjoy the sport. The wife of an old knight pattering his creed is the next victim. She has no more left on her but a tassel and a thread. Then Craddock (Caradoc) bids his lady endure the test. The mantle fits her well except that at her big toe it begins to "crinkle and crout." She confesses that once she kissed her lover before marriage; and her shriving removes even this offence. "Seemly of colour, glittering like gold," the mantle hangs about her just as she would. Arthur gives her the mantle. The queen makes such spiteful remarks that the youth bids the king chasten her. Then the youth brings a boar's head, which he asserts no cuckold's knife can carve.

Some rubbed their knives upon a whetstone:
Some threw them under the table and said they had none.
King Arthur and the child stood looking them upon;
All their knives' edges turned back again.
Craddock had a little knife of iron and of steel;
He brittled (carved) the boar's head wondrous well,
That every knight in the king's court had a morsel.
The little boy had a horn of red gold that rung,
He said, "There was no cuckold shall drink of my horn,
But he should it shed either behind or beforn."
Some shed on their shoulder, and some on their knee;
He that could not hit his mouth put it in his ee (eye);
And he that was a cuckold, every man might him see.
Craddock won the horn, and the boar's head;
His lady won the mantle unto her need;
Every such a lovely lady, God send her will to speed.

Here we find material extant in many forms, in various languages, and connected with different characters. The tale of the magic mantle or beaker which may be used as a test of chastity, is repeatedly embodied in romances from the time of Crestien to Malory, and referred to frequently later, while stories which turn upon the workings of similar tests of continence or fidelity are to be met with the world over. We must not expect incredulity about such things among people who believed that "the law of jealousies," in the fifth chapter of Numbers, was an edict which Moses was bidden by the Lord Almighty to communicate to the people of Israel, and who perhaps had even

seen such a mystery play as was sometimes enacted when Joseph and Mary were exhibited suffering a scriptural test of chastity and pronounced pure.

In an English "bourd" of about 1450, *The Cuckold's Dance*, a humorous, if quite dissolute piece, the horn-test is applied at a feast that King Arthur gives on the occasion of the visit from the Duke of Gloucester. He and his companions take their afflictions merrily and join in a dance to dull their care. The Holy Grail, it may be noted, was a criterion of chastity not unlike the horn of Caradoc. In one case the conception has been exalted into an inspiring symbol, in the other degraded into a means of ribaldry.

It is evident that many of the English and Scottish ballads stand in close connection with the material embodied in the lays. In no instance, except *Orfeo*, can the ballad be shown to be based on the definite artistic form extant; but in numerous cases the fundamental conceptions are the same, and lays and ballads throw light on one another. Like Launfal and Guingamor, Thomas Rhymer and Tam Lin were carried to the Otherworld by fairy queens, and dwelt with them for a time, happy and free from care. Clerk Colvill also had secret relations with a supernatural lady, who, when he married another, turned malignant, as was the custom of fays when their commands were disobeyed, and punished his desertion with death. In another group the elfin knight appears, as in *Orfeo*, abducting ladies high in station and fair of form. Young Akin (Hind Etin) lured a king's daughter from her bower by music into the Elfman's Wood and carried her away in a magic mist. When Fair Lady Isabel, the heroine of Marie's lay of *Yonec*, expressed her longing for the presence of a fairy knight, she was soon in his power. Hardly were her words spoken when he entered her chamber by the high window. Orpheus was associated by Chaucer with the Bret Glascurion of ballad fame, who harped at the king's court so that ladies "waxed wod." Like Orfeo, King Estmere, disguised as a minstrel, gained entrance to

King Adland's hall, and by his magic harping won his lady from the power of a heathen king. Eldrich knights appear elsewhere in ballads, as in *Sir Cawline*. Dissaware in *Lord Lorn and the False Steward* resembles De(s)gare not only in origin and character, but also in his name, interpreted as "in want of meat and lair." Le Freine and Griselda at once call to mind the exquisite Scottish ballad of *Fair Annie*, an independent development of the same theme. The treachery of the knights in *The Earl of Tolouse* is paralleled in the famous *Sir Aldingar*. The motive employed in the first part of the lay of *Doon* appears also in *The Broomfield Hill*: a knight seeks the love of a lady, but at the tryst is put into a deep sleep. In *Lady Diamond* also, a ballad influenced by Boccaccio, we find the theme of two French lays *Ignaure* and *Guiron*, namely, the gruesome repast that a lady makes from her lover's heart, which is served up to her secretly by her cruel, jealous lord. A similar story is found in the *Knight of Courtesy*, a ballad-romance founded on the French *Châtelain de Coucy*. In *Proud Lady Margaret* a hard-hearted maiden is admonished by a dead knight to give over her foolish pride, or she shall repent it sore, which reminds us of the moral to the lay of the *Trot*, a lay based on the notion of the fairy cavalcade so prominent in *Sir Orfeo*, and paralleled in Gower's moral tale of Rosiphele.

The most natural way by which to account for the strange parallelism between the ballads and the lays is to postulate a common source of some sort. Where shall we seek this? Not certainly in the monastery, or hall of the lord, but in the hut of the peasant; not on the scribe's parchment, but on the labourer's lips, in oral tradition, intangible but persistent. With ballads still less than with lays can the time of origin be determined by the date of their first extant written form. The original home of these "waifs of popular tradition" is seldom easy to discover, and their family connections are almost impossible to trace. They preserve the romantic material utilised in the lays in a form suitable for song; and often, no doubt, simple people listened to

an old woman at her spinning-wheel singing the same story that the minstrel, harp in hand, told more artistically to lords and ladies at court. It is, in fact, as Professor Child, once commenting on "the strange changes which stories undergo," remarked: "What poor Ophelia says of us human creatures is even truer of ballads: 'We know what we are, but know not what we may be.'"

In the lays we have, finally, the units of adventure that go to form the sum total of romance. The situations therein presented are repeated over and over again with little real independence of treatment. The lay *motifs* are played so often as to seem commonplace. Familiarity with them, however, will enable us to understand and appreciate better the worth of other parts of the matter of Britain still to be studied.

The Cycle of Sir Tristram

It is appropriate that our study of the Tristram stories should follow directly that of the Breton lays, for in no legendary cycle is the influence of this form of Celtic material more manifest. Several of the most charming episodes in which the famous lovers appear are easily detachable from their surroundings and reveal a previous existence in the form of isolated lays. And, indeed, Marie de France records an incident in Tristram's life based on an earlier lay, the composition of which is ascribed to the hero himself. The good knight, after a year's exile from court, gives way to his longings and returns secretly to Cornwall, where he hides himself in the forest near Ysolt's abode. He carves a message on a piece of wood and puts it in the road where he knows she is to pass. In this he declares that he cannot live without her: it is with them as with the honeysuckle and the hazel, which, once intertwined, no one can separate without destroying both.

This lay, written down by Marie in England, was previously recorded in English under the name *Goteleſ* (honeysuckle), and

is perhaps connected with an Anglo-Saxon lyric, not attached to Tristram, *The Lover's Message*. England, indeed, can well claim the credit of preserving, if not of originating, the absorbing tale of Tristram's love. Not only have we positive statements that it was current among the English, and put by them into poetic form; we know also that it was written down in French by two Norman poets, one of whom we are pretty certain was born in England, while the other may have lived there. And it is on one or the other of these two versions that almost all the later forms are based. The two poets were of different dispositions and wrote in a different spirit. The *Tristan* of Thomas presents us with what has been termed the English, or Germanic, version of the story; that of Béroul, the French, or Breton. Thus all poems about our hero may suitably be treated in two groups. A characteristic difference between them consists in the fact that while the French group represents King Mark as reigning over Cornwall alone and as contemporary with Arthur, in the English Arthur has already passed away and Mark is king both of Cornwall and England.

Thomas's poem is but partially preserved in fragments (in Anglo-Norman handwriting) discovered in England, Germany, and Italy—some 3000 lines in all—only about one-sixth of the work, but sufficient to allow a just estimate of the author's style. The defect, however, is partly remedied by the existence of two early translations of the work. Its scope is easily determined from the faithful, if abridged, version made in Old Norse prose in 1226 by a friar Robert for King Hákon, that insatiable reader of French romance. Its style is more apparent in the translation by an admirable German poet, Gottfried von Strassburg, made early in the thirteenth century. Gottfried did not succeed in nearly 20,000 verses in bringing his work to an end. The last third of the story was added later by two other poets (Ulrich von Türheim and Heinrich von Freiberg), who, working independently of each other, utilised the French version, and record some incidents of which the source is lost. Nowhere is

the story of Tristram so well preserved as in this composite German version. Thence Wagner got the inspiration for his noble music-drama on the theme. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Thomas's version was also used as the basis of a Middle English poem, *Sir Tristram*, which was first edited, with extensive introduction and illustration, by Sir Walter Scott. Before 1200 an interesting short poem called *La Folie Tristan* was composed in England. The author represents the hero, dressed as a fool, recalling the experiences of his life, and by this device gives a fairly complete review of the episodes of the legend.

On the other hand, forming the so-called French group, we have a long fragment by the Norman Béroul; then, a lost poem, which was translated into German, *c.* 1180, by Eilhart von Oberg, closely resembling Béroul's account in the beginning but with a unique conclusion, especially valuable because the French original has disappeared; and finally, an immense prose romance, a conglomerate of all sorts of material factitiously joined together in the course of the thirteenth century Crestien de Troyes and an author called La Chièvre also wrote episodic poems on Tristram, both of which are lost. Crestien's patronesses undoubtedly had a repugnance for compromise in love; and since Ysolt favoured her uxorious husband while adoring another, Crestien may not have presented her in a favourable light. It was from the French version, in the degenerate form of the prose romance, that Malory drew a large part of his famous work.

We now return to Thomas, who may be said to represent the highest achievement of any English poet in the twelfth century. Gaston Paris, whose words always carry with them the weight of a great authority, has made an illuminating comparison between Thomas and his contemporary Crestien, as follows:

> Genius of different kinds appeals to us in these two poets. The Frenchman endeavours especially to make his narrative interesting, amusing even, to please the society for which it is intended; he is "social," truly worldly; he smiles at the adventures he relates, and skilfully lets it appear that he is not taken in by them; he strives to give to his style a constant

elegance, a uniform polish, wherein sparkle here and there words pointed by wit; above all, he wishes to please, and thinks of his public more than of his subject. The Englishman feels with the heroes of his tale; his heart participates in their griefs and joys; he searches the hidden recesses of their souls; his style, embarrassed and often obscure when he narrates adventures that do not thoroughly interest him, becomes living and full of *nuances* when he tries to express the inner feelings, which alone touch him; he writes for himself, and for those who have the same emotional needs as he, much more than for a public sensitive above all to the talent of the narrator and indifferent to the subject of the narrative. It is unfortunate that we cannot compare the *Tristan* of Crestien and that of Thomas; we can at least imagine the difference which the two works would present: the poet of Champagne would show us gracefully poised on a brilliant stand, and carved by a skilled and delicate hand, the cup from which the two lovers drank the drink of love; the Anglo-Norman poet has emptied it, and we feel still trembling in his lines the frenzy that filled his heart.

Tristram was celebrated in early saga, before he was connected with Arthur, as a hero of extraordinary and varied accomplishment, as a warrior and hunter, as well as a lover. He is, moreover, the most famous of all the harpers of romance. Over and over again he is pictured at the royal court making melodious music, and therewith singing lays so full of tenderness and passion that the breasts of his auditors swelled with emotion. It was thus that he stimulated the affection of Ysolt, the beautiful princess of Ireland, to whom he journeyed overseas as a stranger for the healing of his wounds. Thus he won her favour when together they sat in the quiet bower of her palace, and he taught her so skilfully the mysteries of his art that soon her hands became proficient like his, and struck the chords with the same power to ravish the senses and fill with delight. So, in words that haunt the memory, Thomas describes Ysolt later in her loneliness singing to her harp the lay of Guiron and his lady, who suffered even more than she and Tristram from the evil contrivance of foes.

La dame chante doucement,
La vois acorde a l'estrument;
Les mains sont beles, li lais bons,
Douce la vois et bas li tons.

These words exhale the sweetest perfume of romance, under the influence of which we are prone to free ourselves from workaday principles of behaviour, and abandon the conventional standards of commonplace life. Were it but a passing or a frivolous passion that the two cherished, we should be shocked by the flagrant violation of domestic honour that it entailed. But we have a deep conviction of the inevitability of it all. The burden of Tristram's song when with Ysolt of the White Hands in Brittany sums up the whole tragedy of the true lovers' life:

Ysolt ma drue, Ysolt m'amie,
En vus ma mort, en vus ma vie.

Here, we feel, is an attachment over which the subjects had no control: from the magic beaker they drank down death together with rapturous love. As Thomas says:

Tristrans murut pur sue amur
E la bele Ysolt pur tendrur.

The story of Tristram and Ysolt is too well known to require a detailed analysis. But a few passages from Thomas's poem (in Miss Weston's felicitous translation of Gottfried's version) may be quoted here. The first pictures the lovers, banished from court and dwelling alone in a solitary retreat, where all nature ministers to their joy.

"In the dewy morning they gat them forth to the meadow where grass and flowers alike had been refreshed. The glade was their pleasure-ground —they wandered hither and thither, hearkening each other's speech, and waking the song of the birds by their footsteps. Then they turned them to where the cold clear spring rippled forth, and sat beside its stream, and watched its flow, till the sun grew high in the heavens, and they felt its heat. Then they betook them to the linden: its branches offered them a welcome shelter, the breezes were sweet and soft beneath its shade, and the couch at its feet was decked with the fairest grass and flowers.

"There they sat side by side, those true lovers, and told each other tales of those who ere their time had suffered and died for love. They mourned the fate of the sad Queen Dido; of Phyllis of Thrace; and Biblis, whose heart brake for love. With such tales did they beguile the time. But when

they would think of them no more, they turned them again to their grotto and took the harp, and each in their turn sang to it softly lays of love and longing; now Tristram would strike the harp while Isolt sang the words, then it would be the turn of Isolt to make music while Tristram's voice followed the notes. Full well might it be called the Love Grotto."

Thither King Mark is led, even as Guingamor to his joyful meeting with his fairy mistress, by the hunt of the mysterious stag that lures him ever on in apparently fruitless pursuit. He is rewarded by seeing the queen, "more beautiful than a fairy," for whom he could not but yearn. Stealthily the king nears the bower where he knows the lovers to be, and climbs to the little window high in the wall. A tenderly moving sight meets his eyes. There they lay, the entranced pair, on a crystal couch, a naked sword between them.

"He gazed on his heart's delight, Isolt, and deemed that never before had he seen her so fair. She lay sleeping, with a flush as of mingled roses on her cheek, and her red and glowing lips apart, a little heated by her morning wandering in the dewy meadow and by the spring. On her head was a chaplet woven of clover. A ray of sunlight from the little window fell upon her face, and as Mark looked upon her he longed to kiss her, for never had she seemed so fair and so lovable as now. And when he saw how the sunlight fell upon her he feared lest it harm her, or awaken her, and so he took grass and leaves and flowers, and covered the window therewith, and spake a blessing on his love, and commended her to God, and went his way, weeping."

No doubt the "fair adventure" of the love-grotto was the subject of an independent lay, and the same is perhaps the case with the two following episodes in the hero's life. In each we detect a parallel to the general situation already noted in the Franklin's Tale, the indefinite boon granted rashly and fulfilled with sorrow.

To the court of Cornwall comes one day an Irish knight, a former lover of Ysolt, in the guise of a minstrel. After meat, the king bids him show his skill on the lute, and promises him whatever reward he shall ask. Thus requested, the knight begins at once. He sings the king's favourite lays, one after the other, and then craves his boon. When he names it, there is consternation at court, for in his arrogance he claims the queen. Rather than be forsworn, Mark hands over to him the fair Ysolt, and she must needs follow him to the seashore, where his boat lies ready to depart when the tide shall rise. Fortunately, before then news of the event reaches Tristram, who makes his way hastily to the haven-side. Harp in hand, he approaches the

tent where the queen sits weeping bitterly. At the request of the knight he plays the lay of Dido to banish the lady's sorrow. He plays so sweetly that the notes enter Ysolt's heart, and her captor too listens eagerly. The water rises, but they heed not—so insinuating are the sounds. Finally, the tide runs so strong that they can only reach the boat on horseback, and Ysolt insists on being borne by the minstrel. Once in Tristram's arms she is, of course, free, and the traitorous Irish knight must return home, ashamed and sorrowful.

The second tale is permeated with the mysterious magic of the Otherworld. It tells how Tristram won from Duke Gilan of Wales his little dog Petit-Criu, "a fairy dog, that had been sent to the Duke from the land of Avalon, as love-token, by a fay."

"No tongue could tell the marvel of it; 'twas of such wondrous fashion that no man might say of what colour it was. If one looked on the breast and saw nought else, one had said 'twas white as snow, yet its thighs were greener than clover, and its sides, one red as scarlet, the other more yellow than saffron. Its underparts were even as azure, while above 'twas mingled so that no one colour might be distinguished; 'twas neither green nor red, white nor black, yellow nor blue, and yet was there somewhat of all these therein; 'twas a fair purple brown. And if one saw this strange creature of Avalon against the lie of the hair there would be no man wise enough to tell its colour, so manifold and so changing were its hues.

"Around its neck was a golden chain, and therefrom hung a bell, which rang so sweet and clear that when it began to chime Tristram forgot his sadness and his sorrow, and the longing for Isolt that lay heavy on his heart. So sweet was the tone of the bell that no man heard it but he straightway forgot all that aforetime had troubled him. . . .

"Tristram stretched forth his hand and stroked the dog, and it seemed to him that he handled the softest silk, so fine and so smooth was the hair to his touch. And the dog neither growled nor barked nor showed any sign of ill-temper, however one might play with it; nor, as the tale goes, was it ever seen to eat or drink.

"When the dog was borne away, Tristram's sorrow fell upon him as heavy as before, and to it was added the thought how he might by any means win Petit-Criu, the fairy dog, for his lady the queen, that thereby her sorrow and her longing might be lessened. Yet he could not see how this might be brought about either by craft or by prayer, for he knew well that Gilan would not have parted with it for his life. This desire and longing lay heavy on his heart, but he gave no outward sign of his thought."

Now the Duke was in perpetual fear of a giant magician, Argan, and he

promises Tristram whatever he may ask of him, if he will rid him of his terrible foe. This the hero accomplishes after a fierce fight, and then demands the fairy dog as his reward. The Duke pleads with him to take anything else, but when Tristram insists, he yields. "Alas! my lord Tristram," he says, "if that be indeed thy will, I will keep faith with thee and do thy pleasure. Neither craft nor cunning am I minded to use. Though it be greatly against my will, yet what thou desirest, that shall be done."

Tristram, overjoyed, sends the precious dog, hidden cunningly in a lute, to the queen, explaining how he had won it, at great peril to his life, for her sake. At first she had it ever with her, and it brought her great comfort. The bell's wonderful sweet chime made her forget her grief. But when she bethought herself that while she thus rejoiced her lover was in sorrow, she upbraided herself bitterly. The bell she tore from the dog's neck, and no longer had it power to sooth a downcast heart. Yet Ysolt was now the better pleased, for she would not be comforted when Tristram was sad.

Thomas wrote in simple, flowing, octosyllabic couplets, the usual metre of French romances. A much more complicated, and to our ears much less pleasing, metre characterises the Northern English poem *Sir Tristram*, which is based on his poem. This work was obviously written with hearers, not readers, especially in mind. It has all the marks of being prepared for recitation by a minstrel at a public gathering.

The opening stanza, which will serve to illustrate the metre, gives us some would-be indication of the source of the work.

I was a[t Erceldoun,]
With Thomas spoke I there;
There heard I read in roun (private),
Who Tristram got and bore;
Who was king with crown,
And who him fostered (of) yore,
And who was bold baron
As their elders were.
By yere
Thomas tells in town
These adventures, as they were.

From this passage it would appear that one Thomas of Erceldoun was accustomed to tell in public the adventures of Sir Tristram, and that our author had the advantage of con-

versing with him in private on the same matter. This Thomas had a remarkable fictitious career. He was called "Rhymer," and apparently justified the name. His personality is hazy; but there seems to be good evidence to attest his existence as an historical person living towards the close of the thirteenth century. In a very interesting ballad-romance, dating from about 1400, he is said to have gone, like Launfal, to dwell with the queen of fairyland, whose favour he had won. She, however, is said to have conducted him after a while back to this world, and before leaving him here to have granted him the gift of sooth-saying, and told him much of future events. On this account he very soon was associated with Merlin, and for centuries a great deal of influential prophetical literature was current under his name. Indeed, it is said that the "Whole Prophecie" of Merlin, Thomas Rymour, and others, which was collected and issued as early as 1603, continued to be printed as a chap-book down to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when few farm-houses in Scotland were without it. There is no evidence, however, that this Thomas had anything to do with the composition of *Sir Tristram*. It can never be proved, of course, that he did not write a poem on that hero; but it seems highly probable that he was connected with the particular poem before us only because of the identity of his name with that of the Anglo-Norman author of the original version, it being well understood that the popularity of the poem would be appreciably increased by reference to so distinguished an authority as the prophet of Erceldoun.

Robert of Brunne, in his chronicle written *c.* 1340, is thought to bear witness to the fact that *Sir Tristram* was attributed to Thomas of Erceldoun even in his time. In an important passage, in which he reproaches those who used such artificial metres and strange phraseology that the common people could hardly understand what they meant, he says:

> I see in song, in sedgeyng tale,
> Of Erceldoun and of Kendale,

None them say as they them wrought,
And in their saying it seemeth nought.

Thereupon follows directly a plain reference to the English poem, which is apparently contrasted with the work of the original author Thomas (neither of Erceldoun nor of Kendale), though this is not the inference usually drawn from the passage :

That mayst thou hear in Sir Tristrem,
Over gests it has the (e)steem,
Over all that is or was.
If men it said as made Thomas ;
But I hear it no man so say,
That of some couplet some is away ;
So their fair saying herebeforn,
So their travail near forlorn.
They say it for pride and nobley,
That none were such as they ;
And all that they would overwhere,
All that ilk will now forfare.
They said in so quaint English,
That many a one wots not what it is.

The last lines may be taken to refer to the *Sir Tristram* we are discussing, which is certainly written in a very complicated metre, and so succinctly that it but ill reproduces the couplets of the earlier version. It would have required a great poet to move quite unhampered by the clogs of rhyme that this peculiar stanza imposed. Not satisfied, however, with these restrictions, the English writer laboured for alliterative effects. No one, then, will be surprised to learn that frequently he sacrificed the sense of the story, to say nothing of the general impression, to his enforced display of clever artifice. The whole story, moreover, he cut down so recklessly that it is at times almost unintelligible. Gottfried took nearly 20,000 lines to reproduce about two-thirds of Thomas's poem. The English minstrel disposed of the whole in about 3500. In contrast to the "quaint English" and elaborate stanza in which the story is obscured and disfigured, Robert places Thomas's irreproachable version in couplets. And

rightly so. The Anglo-Norman poem, simple and clear, reveals in the author a very high degree of poetic power. Truly, Robert had reason to say that "over all gests" the story of Tristram was worthy to be esteemed "if men it said as Thomas made it." But such a remark would in truth have been unwarranted if it applied to the English poem. The author was a clever rhymer, and some passages of his work have much vigour, but had not the adventures of Tristram been well known before, from French narratives current in England, this poem would not have sufficed to spread his fame.

We have no other English treatment of the Tristram story until we come to Malory's redaction of one version of the late French prose romance. Here is a hotch-potch of miscellaneous adventures, many of which have nothing to do with the central theme and serve only to prolong the tale. Echoes of classical antiquity, reminiscences of the Bible, bits of popular tradition, independent works of different cycles, are to be discovered in the vast accumulation. But above all it is noticeable how the costuming has changed. The manners and dress of the heroes and heroines are those of the late days of chivalry. Tristram is a vastly different personage from what he was even in the time of Thomas. He is now a conventional knight-errant, who spends his time going about from one tourney to another, ever on the lookout for adventure. In the earlier stories, Arthur and his knights have practically no part to play. Now, one at least of them surely appears on every page, and no uninformed reader would for a moment suspect that Tristram was a hero once quite independent of Arthur, and that his thoroughgoing connection with the Round Table is to be found only in late compilations, which departed far too freely from trustworthy tradition, in order to gratify the taste of an uncritical Continental audience whose appetite for familiar adventures appears to have been insatiate.

Inasmuch as Malory drew almost one-third of his *Morte Darthur* (mostly to be found in the eighth, ninth, and tenth

books) from the French prose *Tristan*, a word concerning his method may be in place here. There is so great diversity in the various manuscripts of a prose romance that it is well-nigh impossible to state just what process was followed in any particular instance. But in general it may be said that from a common archetype scribes developed divergent versions, each of which, being repeatedly copied, was differently altered by different sorts of men to answer different purposes. There appears to have been a "vulgate," and an "enlarged" *Tristan*, the former going under the name of a supposed "Luces de Gast," the latter under that of an equally fictitious "Hélie de Boron." It was from some manuscript of the vulgate version that Malory drew his story. Here, more than anywhere else, save only in the Quest of the Holy Grail, he abstains from "reducing."

We claim the immortal legend of Tristram and Ysolt as peculiarly ours, not only because it was formed in its present shape in England, being a possession of our composite race before and after the Conquest, but also because it is localised in Britain; and, as is well known, all nations cling to the traditions of the country in which they have settled, even though to come into power they had to dispossess those to whom these traditions rightly belonged. Mark was a king of Cornwall, and that, it seems, in history, before he became the legendary husband of Ysolt. His castle was at Tintagel on the Cornish coast. Tristram, originally a Pictish or Scandinavian hero, was probably born in Anglesey and lived in Wales. One Ysolt was a princess of Ireland, the other of Brittany. In these neighbouring lands the action passes almost exclusively, and the hero traverses the dangerous waters between with as much equanimity as any Norse viking whose home was on the sea. The people among whom the Tristram story grew up were as familiar with ocean as with land pathways.

The saga certainly originated in heathen times, when Christianity had not softened the minds of men; in a barbarous epoch when people lived a rough, uncivilised life in rude sim-

plicity; in a time when chivalrous warfare was undreamed of, when heroes fought on foot, using as weapons arrows speeded by the cross-bow, or javelins thrown by hand. If we stop to think of it, the manners and customs of the court of the Cornish king are seen to be often barbarous and savage. No Christian sentiments govern the hearts of the characters. Might is right; cunning is praiseworthy; passions are unbridled, and impulses unrestrained. The primordial instincts of men and women are seen unveiled.

Tristram and Ysolt are the most illustrious lovers of British, perhaps of any romance. Wherein do they differ typically from those of other lands? In this, that the whole of their lives moves about the pivot of their mutual devotion. With them both love is a persistent, uncontrollable, supreme passion. It is the end that justifies every means, the cause of an uninterrupted ecstasy that renders death at any moment as welcome as life. The heroines of classical story never moved their lovers to the same overmastering passion, never controlled their destinies by the same mysterious charm. In the grave *chansons de geste* love was little welcome: women played no dominant rôle in the careers of the stern warriors of Charlemagne, ever engaged in manly conflict for communal gain. In the North, on the other hand, there is intensity and passion in abundance. There the women share the greatest joys of the men; they stimulate, incite, enter into the struggle themselves. Yet theirs was self-sacrifice that asked no return, devotion that demanded no favour. Life was too real for music, time too precious for reverie. Men were not men, they felt, who waited on luxurious ease. With Guthrun blood is thicker than any amorous philtre. Without a scruple she deceives her husband to get revenge for her brother's death, but not to indulge a guilty love. The prototypes of the Northern heroines are the strong, impetuous, warlike goddesses of Valhalla, clad in birnie, and pointing with flashing spear to the scene of strife; those of the Celtic lady-loves are the exquisitely beautiful, richly attired, marvel-

lously subtle queens of a joyous Otherworld, who fascinate and soothe.

It is not possible here to trace the history of the Tristram legend either in internal growth or in dissemination. It is well to remember, however, that there was no one in the Middle Ages in Western Europe who did not know it in some form. All the great mediæval poets and those of the Renaissance evince their profound appreciation of its charm. In our own time, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, and Swinburne in England, Wagner in Germany, and others in many places, have reawakened it to power.

We may leave the hero with the presentation of one aspect of his character that Malory exalted. It will indicate another reason why he was beloved in England, and show how the stories of Arthur affected the conceptions of the nobility.

> And so Tristram learned to be a harper passing all other, that there was none such called in no country, and so in harping and on instruments of music he applied him in his youth for to learn. And after, as he growed in might and strength, he laboured ever in hunting and hawking, so that never gentleman more that ever we heard tell of. And as the book saith, he began good measures of blowing of beasts of venery and beasts of chase, and all manner of vermains; and all these terms we have yet of hawking and hunting. And therefore the book of venery, of hawking and hunting, is called the book of Sir Tristram. Wherefore, as me seemeth, all gentlemen that bear old arms ought of right to honour Sir Tristram for the goodly terms that gentlemen have and use, and shall to the day of doom, that thereby in a manner all men of worship may dissever a gentleman from a yeoman, and from a yeoman a villain. For he that gentle is will draw unto him gentle taches, and to follow the custom of noble gentlemen.

The Cycle of Sir Gawain

Of all the heroes of British romance, not excepting Arthur himself, Gawain is the most admirable and the most interesting. In the early poems of the cycle he is invariably represented as the mirror of courtesy, a truly noble knight without fear or reproach. His courage was unequalled, his benevolence unbounded, his wisdom acknowledged by all. He was "the

golden-tongued," "the invincible," "gay, gracious, and good." "Ever," we are told by Wace, "he was wont to do more than he agreed and to give more than he promised." Arthur loved him most of all his followers, and his companions measured their exploits by his. Tennyson made a conspicuous blunder in conceiving him as "adulterous," "false," "reckless," "irreverent." Nowhere does the irreligious Gawain appear in English literature before the time of Malory. In all sources that present the original saga in its purity, the respect for him is universal, unfeigned, and justified. He was the beloved of all, the envied of none.

Although there is no long biographical romance devoted to him, as to Tristram and Lancelot and Merlin, there is hardly an Arthurian story in which Gawain does not play a distinguished part, and there are numerous poems about single episodes in his career. The several Middle English poems which have him for a hero are all connected with French versions, but in most instances the direct originals have disappeared. Probably some of these were Anglo-Norman, short episodic poems such as appear to have been written by Bleheris, in what has been called a *Geste of Sir Gawain*, and utilised later by writers like Wauchier de Denain, a continuator of Crestien's *Perceval*.

Gawain and the Green Knight (*c.* 1370) is incomparably the best of the English romances, and one of the finest in any language. It is a misfortune that we have no information about the author's life and personality; for, next to Chaucer his contemporary, he is perhaps the greatest of our mediæval poets. In another volume we shall consider his merit in general as a literary artist: here we have only to do with his work as an Arthurian romance. The author, it may be said, lived in the West Midland district (probably Cheshire), where the memory of Gawain seems long to have lingered. He wrote in a very elaborate stanza, combining alliteration and rhyme.

King Arthur and his knights are assembled at Camelot (Somersetshire) one New Year's Day, awaiting some adventure, when a gigantic knight, clad

only in green, and seated on a marvellous green steed, rides into the banquet hall and challenges any one present to exchange blows with him. He will give his opponent the first stroke, on condition that he may have the privilege of returning it a year later. The knights are all speechless at first, but, being taunted with cowardice by the stranger, Arthur speedily rises and offers to undertake the exploit himself. Gawain, however, induces the king to grant him the favour, and, after making arrangements with the Green Knight for the return blow, to be given at the Green Chapel, the stranger's residence, he takes the latter's axe and hews off his head. The Green Knight, however, speedily mounts his horse, reminds Gawain of his agreement, and rides off with his head in his hand, leaving the warriors dazed and fearful. When the appointed time approaches, Gawain, much to the sorrow of all at court, sets out to fulfil his covenant, and after many adventures reaches on Christmas eve a beautiful castle, where he seeks shelter. Learning that the Green Chapel is but two miles away, he accepts the urgent invitation of his host to remain with him for the intervening three days, and makes good cheer in the castle. After a magnificent Christmas feast, his gracious host suggests that his guest remain in the castle to be entertained by his wife, while he goes off early to the chase, covenanting at the same time to exchange at nightfall whatever of value each obtains during the day. In the knight's absence, Gawain is sorely tempted by the blandishments of the beautiful wife, who frankly seeks his love. But he parries her advances with courtly art, and only takes a kiss she offers. This he gives to his host in the evening, and receives in return all the spoils of the chase. Three times the knight is thus tested, and each time refuses the lady's love, and all else she offers, except a magic girdle, which, she assures him, will render the wearer invulnerable. The kisses he returns to his host, according to their covenant thrice repeated; but the gift of the girdle he keeps unrevealed.

When New Year's Day arrives, Gawain makes ready for the combat, and starts for the Green Chapel, his host providing him with a guide. The latter tries to dissuade him from undertaking so perilous an adventure; but Gawain, undismayed, scorns the very appearance of cowardice or bad faith. He arrives alone at the Green Chapel, a ghastly trysting-place, where he hears the gruesome noise of an axe being sharpened on a grindstone. Soon the giant appears, weapon in hand, and praises Gawain's fidelity in keeping his word. Gawain makes ready to receive the blow, and after one or two feints the giant at last lets the axe fall, in such a way, however, as to do no serious harm. Gawain, having thus fulfilled his promise, starts up and prepares to defend himself against any further attack. But the Green Knight bids him not be disturbed: Gawain is, he recognises, the most valiant knight in the world, and he honours him for his valour. He explains that he and the host

of the castle are one and the same person, that he was fully aware of the lady's wiles, and that all had been done at his instigation to test Gawain's virtue. He begs the hero to return with him to his dwelling, where he promises him a fair reception, but Gawain insists on going at once to Camelot. He is abashed at the discovery of his deceit in accepting the girdle, and tells his shame to his companions of the Round Table. They make light of the matter, and agree ever after to wear a green lace similar to his in memory of the remarkable event. Thus Gawain's fame was spread still more throughout the land.

This romance is made up of two distinct parts nowhere else so connected—the beheading incident and the chastity test. The first is closely paralleled in the primitive tale of *Bricriu's Feast*, and elsewhere in Irish, where Cuchulinn is the hero; and there can be no doubt that it existed as an independent Celtic tale in very early times. It reappears in Old French, attached to Caradoc in the verse *Perceval*, and to Lancelot in the prose version; but both of these are late redactions introducing features obviously not primitive. In the French *Mûle sans Frein* and the German *Diu Krône*, the adventure is ascribed to Gawain, who was unquestionably the earlier hero. The English poem is based on a French (Anglo-Norman?) account; but the author treated his material with a great deal of freedom, and the unusual charm of the narrative (which no brief summary can at all reproduce) is assuredly due to him. It was probably his idea to connect with this episode the feature of the chastity test, of which many parallels exist. The statement at the end of the poem about the knights' wearing the lace in Gawain's honour seems to have been suggested by the establishment of the Order of the Garter about 1348.

In a short poem in six-line stanzas, *The Green Knight*, preserved only in a fifteenth-century form, we have practically the same story localised in the "west country." This poem, though of slight literary value, would be more significant than is usually thought if one could establish it as independent of the longer one, indicating a simple form previously existing in Anglo-Norman or English. Similarly preserved (in the Percy Folio MS.), and in

the same stanza, occur two much more interesting poems, *The Turk and Gawain* and *The Carl of Carlisle*, which probably arose on English soil.

Because of the very imperfect state of *The Turk and Gawain*, it is difficult to determine what was the nature of the original story. It appears, however, that Gawain visits an underworld castle inhabited by giants, where he tries his skill in various games, not unlike the way Thor visits the dwelling of Utgarthaloki in the prose *Edda*. By the aid of his companion, a "Turk" (dwarf?), he outwits his opponents, and is saved from death. The Turk, in return for his services, asks the hero to cut off his head, and Gawain consents somewhat reluctantly. As soon as the blood flows, the Turk becomes a handsome knight, and the people of the castle are also freed from enchantment.

The *Carl* exists not only in stanzaic form, but also in a version in couplets. It contains the theme (found variously elsewhere) of the host who maltreats or slays all guests who do not implicitly obey his requests. The hero of the tale is the first one spared, and that because he does unquestioningly whatever his host bids him do. The author of the better version begins in the regular minstrel style: "Listen, lordings, a little stond (while)," and then in about a hundred lines acquaints his hearers with the names of a large number of romantic heroes known in England. He speaks particularly of Sir Ironside, a warrior who figures in Malory's seventh book as Gareth's opponent. The minstrel, evidently of low station, wrote in a boorish style, to please an audience of common folk.

In the *Awntyrs* (*Adventures*) *of Arthur at the Tarn Wadling* we have another poem in honour of Gawain, a poem of exceptional merit, vigorously and freshly told. Tarn Wadling covered about a hundred acres of land in the forest of Inglewood in Cumberland. The author was quite familiar with the district and introduced many names of actual places, most of which are easy to identify. He probably lived in Lancashire or Cheshire about the middle of the fourteenth century.

King Arthur, while with his followers at Carlisle, one day goes hunting. Gawain accompanies Queen Guinevere, who is gaily dressed and rides a milk-white horse. All the rest become absorbed in the chase, and he is left alone with the Queen. She is lying under a laurel tree just at undern when the adventure befalls. Suddenly the day grows as dark as midnight, and a fierce storm of rain, sleet, and snow arises. Then appears a flame from the lake, like Lucifer, and yelling piteously glides towards Guinevere. The ghastly ghost is fearful to behold, covered with toads and embraced by snakes. The dogs make off in terror, and the other animals escape as they can. But Gawain, undaunted, boldly conjures the spirit to tell her purpose. She declares that she is the mother of Guinevere, suffering this punishment because of her sins. She begs a sight of her daughter. When Gawain brings the Queen, the spirit bids her take warning from her mother's terrible fate, and mend her ways. Guinevere implores her to say if aught can lighten her care, and learns that thirty trentals of masses will bring her to bliss. She is told also what qualities she herself should strive to attain. Then the spirit pronounces a prophecy regarding Arthur's fate, and weeping departs to her woeful dwelling. The clouds disperse, and the sun shines brightly again. Arthur collects his men, and all ride together to Randolph's Hall.

While at supper, a lady enters the hall accompanied by a knight splendidly armed. Arthur welcomes them and asks their mission. The knight gives his name as Galleroun, Prince of Galloway and other adjoining lands. This district had been won by Arthur and given to Gawain. The stranger challenges any one to meet him in single combat to settle their dominion. Arthur agrees to find a match for him the next day at noon, and urges him to accept hospitality meanwhile. Gawain conducts him to a rich pavilion, where he is royally served. He himself asks for permission to undertake the fight. The following morning, in the presence of lords and ladies, the great encounter takes place. Fiercely the two brave men struggle, and great is the anxiety of Gawain's friends. Guinevere especially is troubled when she sees her hero wounded, and her grey eyes flow with tears. But he renews the fight with courage, and soon conquers his foe. Galleroun's lady now pleads with the Queen to save her lemman, and Guinevere begs Arthur to stop the joust. This, however, is not necessary, for Galleroun admits that he has been beaten, and that Gawain is "in this middle earth matchless of might." He offers his sword to the King, and renounces all claim to his possessions. Knights hasten to care for the wounded and weary combatants. Then Arthur offers Gawain Glamorgan and other places if he will relinquish his rights and leave the valiant Galleroun his present possessions. Gawain readily yields to the King's wish, and all repair to Carlisle, where Galleroun weds his lady, "with gifts and gersouns (presents) of Sir Gawain the gay." Arthur celebrates a feast of the Round Table, into which fellowship Galleroun is received.

Guinevere, we read in the last stanza, accomplishes her vows to redeem her mother's soul, and has an extraordinary number of masses sung. Thus ends this "ferly" at the Tarn Wadling.

The second half of the poem, which deals with the fight of Galleroun and Gawain, gives simply a conventional situation, vitalised by the author's imaginative power; the first half, curiously combined with it, deserves some comment. The setting of the hunt, during which certain persons get separated from the rest and then experience an adventure, is a commonplace of romance, yet always effective. The feature of the ghostly appearance is but an adaptation of a story usually called the *Trentals of St. Gregory*, where the Pope's mother is the sufferer for her unconfessed sins of lechery. This story is preserved, it may be said, in no less than three poetical versions in English. Guinevere had long ere this won an unenviable reputation for infidelity, and it was easy to have this story attached to her, even as in Chestre's *Sir Launfal* she is made to play the rôle of Potiphar's wife, previously ascribed in the story to an unnamed queen.

The *Awntyrs* (*Adventures*) *of Arthur* is akin in inspiration and form to *Gawain and the Green Knight*. It arose in the same region, at about the same time, and reflects the same conditions of life and thought. The author's vision included both the serious and the gay in life; he rebuked earnestly the frivolously incontinent, but showed his delight in noble merriment. He had much of the old Saxon attitude; he employed alliterative speech. But the gallantry of France had softened his tone and affected his phrase. The refinement of gentleness pervades the poem; and elaborate stanzaic structure differentiates it from works of the Germanic past. The stanza is composed of nine long and four short alliterative lines, rhyming *abababababcdddc*. The last four lines form a sort of "wheel," and one stanza is connected with the next by the carrying over of words in its last line to the first line of the following. This feature, most familiar in the structure of the *Pearl* (by the same author as *Gawain and the Green Knight*) is also characteristic of another Arthurian poem, *Golagros and*

Gawain, a product, it would seem, of the same time and district, notwithstanding the fact that its only extant form is more Northern, preserved in a print of one of the early Scottish presses (1508). In Scotland, it is noteworthy, the book obtained considerable popularity. The tale is made up of two distinct parts of unequal length: the first of these occupies some eighteen stanzas, the second the remaining eighty-five.

Arthur is represented as setting out in royal array, with a great host, to Tuscany. After much wearisome travel, they come to a fair castle, where the king determines to ask lodging. Kay begs permission to make inquiries. He enters the open gate and penetrates to the hall, but finds no occupant at first. At last he observes a dwarf roasting a fowl on an open fire. Kay snatches the bird roughly and is about to devour it, when the dwarf makes the hall resound with his uproar, and a grim lord appears. He reproves Kay for his bad manners; but finding him boastful and ill of speech, he strikes him to the floor and then withdraws. As soon as he recovers, Kay hurries to the King and tells of his failure.

> Then spake Sir Gawain, the gay, gracious, and good,
> Sir, ye know that Sir Kay is crabbed of kind;
> I read (counsel) ye make forth a man meeker of mood,
> That will with fairness fraist (try) friendship to find!

Arthur thereupon urges Gawain himself to go and seek shelter once more. His courteous request is immediately granted, and the knight welcomes Arthur to his hall and banquets him richly. There the King and his men remain four days, after which they continue their journey.

They come after a while to another castle by a river. The King, astonished at its magnificence, inquires to whom it belongs. Learning from a follower, Sir Spinogras, that it is held by a very powerful lord, Golagros, who submits to no one, Arthur vows to make him swear allegiance later. He pushes on to "the city of Christ" (a late touch, to have him emulate Charlemagne), but on his way back halts at the castle. He despatches Gawain, Lancelot, and Ywain to the lord to demand submission. They are urged by Spinogras to be very polite in their petition, for the lord is an uncommonly doughty warrior. "Make him no menace," he urges, "but all measure"; for "it hinders never for to be hendly (gracious) of speech." They follow his advice when they come into the knight's presence.

> Then Sir Gawain the gay, good, and gracious,
> That ever was builded in bliss, and bounty embraced;

Jolly and gentle, and full chivalrous,
That never point of his price was founden defaced ;
Eager and ertand (enterprising), and right aunterous,
Illumined with loyalty, and with love laced,
Mels (announces) of the message to Sir Golagros.

But, despite Gawain's fair words, Golagros will not at once yield up the freedom his elders have long preserved, and Arthur feels forced to besiege his castle. After several single combats in which the King's followers are mostly successful, Golagros himself appears, and Gawain goes forth to meet him. The terrible struggle between them is described at length. In the end Gawain overcomes his opponent, yet is loath to slay him. But Golagros prefers death to shame. Magnanimously, then, to save appearances for his foe, Gawain agrees to go with him to his castle, as if he were himself beaten. Arthur is overcome with extreme grief when he sees "the flower of knighthood" thus quit the field ; but the situation is soon made plain. Golagros explains to his men how he has fared in the battle, and how Gawain has generously spared him. They agree to submit to Arthur, and all together make their way to the King to promise fealty. The incident ends happily : the King's vow is fulfilled, and the friendship of Golagros is secured.

In the *Avowing of King Arthur, Sir Gawain, Sir Kay, and Sir Baldwin of Britain* we have a poem which may well be connected with those just preceding, not only because it deals extensively with Gawain, but also because it is written in the same temper and is localised in the same district of Tarn Wadling and Inglewood Forest. Here too is enforced the contrast between the considerate Gawain, who generously aids his beaten foe, and Kay "that out of time boasts and blows," yet is regularly defeated. Gawain again appears as the avowed servant of Guinevere. He is the mainstay of Arthur, the adored of all at court. The poem is also interesting as giving an important rôle to Bishop Baldwin, a knight unknown to French romance, though he is mentioned several times in the Welsh records, and in Malory, as constable of the court. He was probably confused with the Archbishop of Canterbury in Richard's time. In the *Carl of Carlisle*, the trio, Gawain, Kay, and Sir Baldwin, appeared hunting together. Here the bishop is a purveyor of wise domestic philosophy. In general structure the *Avowing* belongs

to the type of "gab" literature, which we have seen exemplified in the fabulous *Pilgrimage of Charlemagne.*

Arthur, lying at Carlisle, hears of a great boar in Inglewood Forest, which he sets out to hunt, accompanied only by Gawain, Kay, and Baldwin. When they discover the boar, Arthur makes an avow to catch him himself alone, and bids the others make similar avows. Gawain swears to watch at Tarn Wadling all night; Kay, to ride through the forest till day, and slay any one who refuses to let him pass; Baldwin, never to be jealous of his wife, never to refuse meat to any man, or fear a threat of death. Each goes his own way. The King finds the boar, and slays it after a hard encounter. Then, inasmuch as he "couth of venery," he brittles him, and hangs him on an oak. Kay in the forest meets a knight, Sir Menealf of the Mountain, carrying off a beautiful lady against her will. He challenges him to fight, but is easily overcome. Then he urges Menealf to go to the Tarn Wadling, where Gawain will requite him. Gawain espouses his friend's cause. He overcomes the knight in two jousts—the first to ransom Kay, the second to free the young lady. Menealf agrees to take the maiden to Guinevere, and say that he has been sent by "Gawain, her knight," to be at her disposition. Kay, it is significant, persistently taunts Menealf when Gawain beats him; while Gawain tries to make up for his companion's rudeness by acts of considerate kindness. Menealf, we learn, is received by Arthur as a knight of the Round Table, and Gawain is lauded. Baldwin likewise proves himself faithful in the test of each of his avows.

The poem is a peculiar combination of unlike material from different sources. It is only fused into the appearance of unity by the author's skill. Arthur here is less of a royal figure than usual. He appears as a boar-hunter, as in Welsh tradition, and arranges practical jokes to test his comrades, for such his knights are. It is a work of the late fourteenth century, in stanzas of sixteen lines each, rhyming *aaab cccb dddb eceb.* Alliteration is only fitfully employed, not pervasively as in the West Midland poems. Yet the heroes are all presented popularly in an English way, without the over-refinement and sophistication of the French of the time. That on the Continent also Gawain and Kay were similarly regarded as of contrasting character is apparent from the following counsel which the God of Love gives to the lover in the *Roman de la Rose*:

The case
Of Arthur's Seneschal, Sir Kay,
Remember: loved he to missay,
Fulfilled of hatred, spite, and spleen.
Right well was Gawain loved, I ween,
For courtesy, while Kay was blamed
For ribald speech, and evil famed
Among all knights for boorishness.

In the *Wedding of Sir Gawain*, a fifteenth-century stanzaic poem, somewhat over 900 lines long, we have Gawain figuring as the hero of an ancient story, of which several English versions exist in which he plays no part. It is the familiar tale of Chaucer's Wife of Bath, the tale of Florent in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Gower appears to have found the narrative in an example-book, while Chaucer relied on some poem more like a Breton lay. In the Percy MS. is another version, closely connected with the *Wedding*, but independent. In these two alone is Gawain mentioned.

Again the scene is the same: Arthur out hunting in Inglewood Forest. Following a hart, the King is separated from his men, when he is accosted by a warrior, who says that he intends now to requite him for having deprived him of his lands and given them to Gawain (as in the *Awntyrs*). Arthur pleads that it would be dishonourable to slay him unarmed, and offers to make amends. The knight grants him a respite of a twelvemonth on condition that he return then to the same place, alone and in the same array, and say what it is that women desire most. If he bring no answer, he shall lose his head. The King agrees and departs to join his companions. "His heart was wonder heavy," but in no one did he confide except Gawain. The latter suggests that they two ride in different directions, question every one, and collect answers. This they do, and each fills a large book. But Arthur is still nervous, and decides to continue the inquiry. In the forest he meets a loathly woman, whose hideous features are noted in detail. She tells the King that she knows the only answer that will save his life, but this she will reveal only on condition that he gives her Gawain to wed. He declares he will not do it without Gawain's permission, but he will do his best to induce him thus to rescue his lord from peril. Gawain, under the circumstances, needs no persuasion. He is ready to marry the hag, though she were a fiend, as foul as the devil, "or else were I not your friend." No wonder Arthur acknowledged that of all knights Gawain bore the flower.

When Arthur again meets Dame Ragnell (for so the loathly creature has called herself), she tells him that what women most desire is sovereignty. Arthur, thus enlightened, rides to his tryst ; but not until all other answers are rejected does he use this. The knight divines whence the wisdom came, and curses her who gave it, Ragnell, his sister. Gawain fulfils his part of the compact, marries the foul lady with all publicity, and takes her to his chamber. When, once bedded with her, she is transformed into the fairest of women, and when he gives her the sovereignty, leaving her to decide whether it would be better to be fair during the day or night, she says she shall be always beautiful. Then follows a pleasant scene. Arthur, anxious about Gawain, fearing lest the hag should slay him, comes in the morning to learn what has happened. He rejoices when he hears of Gawain's good fortune, and avows his eternal gratitude for his loyal love.

The earliest form of the story is to be found in Irish, but there it is much less developed. In the Irish tale, the lady in loathsome shape has evidently transformed herself by her own power in order to test a favoured youth. But she is made to represent allegorically an abstraction. She is the symbol of the Sovereignty of Erin, which he is destined to win. In Chaucer she seems also to be a free agent, a good fay who desires only to aid, though at the same time to prove, a youth she chooses to please. She first appears with a bevy of four-and-twenty maidens dancing on the green. In Gower, however, she is represented as afflicted by the spell of a stepmother, from which she can only be released by marriage with a valiant knight. Foreign features have thus become gradually blended with the original elements to produce a strange result. The transformed lady, being the sister of the giant-magician, is in possession of the secret and reveals it to the hero who will help her to freedom. The idea of sovereignty perpetuates itself, but becomes the answer to the question what women most desire.

We can only surmise why this story was attached to Gawain. It may have been simply to enhance its interest, or the change was suggested by a desire to picture the loving relations between the king and his nephew, to display above all the nobility of the self-sacrificing hero, who never failed in point of honour. But perhaps there was a deeper cause. That Gawain had relations

with a lady of the Otherworld is a fact attested by numerous other romantic stories attached to him. That he dwelt with her in her land is equally certain. Despite all the localisations of his grave by unimaginative folk, there was a well-founded tradition that he disappeared mysteriously from the world, like Launfal and Guingamor, like Arthur and Ywain. This tradition was evidently in Chaucer's mind when, in the Squire's Tale, he remarked that even Gawain, "with his olde curteisye," if he had "come ageyn out of Fairye," could not have saluted a fair assembly more suitably than the knight upon the steed of brass who rode into the presence of King Cambynskan.

In a striking passage at the end of the *Wedding*, the author says that Gawain lived with his lady but five years, during which time he abandoned warlike pursuits, and that he afterwards cherished the memory of this love above any other similar experience. By the beautiful lady, moreover, he had the son Gyngalyn, who afterwards became famous. A special cycle of romance deals with the adventures of this son of Gawain, Guinglain, otherwise known as Libeaus Desconus, The Fair Unknown. The original French version of the romance concerning him is lost, but in the English *Libeaus Desconus* we have a redaction that permits us to determine its scope, if not its style. It was a simple biographical romance, conventional in general structure, but containing uncommonly primitive material.

Apart from the interesting account of the birth and boyhood of the hero, to which we shall return, we have a series of adventures performed by him which are all characteristic: a fight at the Ford Perilous; an encounter with giants; a beauty competition for a prize sparrowhawk, settled by single combat between the lovers of the rival ladies; a dispute about a fairy dog (like Petit-Criu), which last induces a visit to the fairy castle of the Golden Isle, where the hero is duped by an enchantress whose commands he disobeys; a combat with a lord of another castle with a "custom," who only gives hospitality on condition that the visitor beats him in fight; and finally, the rescue (by a kiss) of a lady enchanted into the form of a hideous serpent. By means of this heroic exploit, made possible by his victory over two fierce enchanters

who held her captive at Sinadoun, Libeaus wins the transformed princess as a bride, and returns with her to Arthur's court, where they marry in splendour, and return to rule over her lands.

Towards the close of the twelfth century, the lost French original of the English romance was worked over into a very charming poem by a knight, Renaud de Beaujeu, who wrote, he tells us, not professionally, but for private reasons, to evince his love for a lady and to show her what he could do.

Not satisfied with having the hero achieve the adventure of the *fier baiser*, with which the romance naturally ought to end, he represents him as sending the transformed princess back to court to await his return, while he sets off himself to win the fay of the Golden Isle, with whom he is desperately in love. He succeeds in obtaining her pardon for his previous neglect, and they dwell together for a time in indescribable happiness. But finally he hears of a tourney that Arthur has proclaimed in the hope of luring him back, and he determines to abandon luxury and ease for a more honourable life. The fay, learning of his decision, has him transported while asleep away from the castle, of which when he wakes he sees no trace, and he makes nis way with his faithful squire to the Isle of Valledon, where the tourney is appointed. There he is victorious over all his opponents, is heartily welcomed, when his incognito is removed, by the King and his father Gawain, and only then weds the Queen of Wales whom he has freed. The poet, however, felt that this was not the ending he desired, and promised, if his work met with favour, to take him back to his true love, the fay.

The material of this cycle was widely popular. The early (Anglo-Norman?) work was redacted in German and Italian poems, and there is a later version in French prose. The English poem also was long familiar in England, as is evident from the numerous references to it in later works. It enjoyed, moreover, the doubtful honour of appearing in the list of "romances of prys" in *Sir Thopas*. Since it was written about 1350, in the neighbourhood of Kent, the author has been identified by some with Thomas Chestre, the author of the *Launfal*, but the evidence is inconclusive. The English *Libeaus Desconus*, because of the "rhyme doggerel" (the tail-rhyme strophe) in which it is composed and the minstrel's method, is incompar-

ably less attractive than the treatment by Renaud of the same material.

This son of Gawain is to be identified with the son of that hero and the lady known only as the sister of Brandelis, at a meeting recorded in the English poem, the *Jeaste of Sir Gawain*, probably drawn from incidents in an (Anglo-Norman?) poem akin to the source of the *Perceval* of Wauchier de Denain.

Gawain, out hunting, happens on a beautiful lady in a pavilion. She accords him her love. But her brothers, who later appear, are indignant at the situation, and challenge him to fight. His offers to amend his wrong being refused, he engages all three one after another. The first two he readily conquers, but with the third, Brandelis, he has a long and indecisive combat. At dusk they give up the struggle, agreeing, however, to fight to the end the next time they meet. Gawain begs Brandelis to befriend his gentle sister; but when the hero is gone, Brandelis treats her so cruelly that she leaves the castle, and is never heard of afterwards.

The English poet says that Gawain and Brandelis did not meet again, for which Arthur's knights were glad. This is clearly a distorted conclusion. In the *Perceval* they renew the struggle some years later at the King's court. When the fight is at its fiercest, Brandelis's beautiful sister appears with her young son, who pleads with both uncle and father to end the strife. Finally, Arthur himself makes peace, and receives Brandelis into the fellowship of the Round Table.

The adventures of Guinglain illustrate a favourite type of biographical romance. A young hero, brought up alone in a forest by his mother, in ignorance of the world and his parentage, only called by her "Fair Son," learns by accident of Arthur's court, makes his way thither, and is welcomed by the king, who permits him, despite his youth, to undertake a difficult task that soon presents itself. Hereupon he evinces surprising bravery, and overcomes all obstacles to his mission. Connected stories of this kind doubtless existed early in Celtic speech, as the fifteenth-century Gaelic *Lay of the Great Fool* sufficiently testifies. In the Breton lay of *Tyolet*, moreover, we read of a young hero whose *enfances* are practically identical with those of Gawain's son.

Sir Perceval is but another, though the most famous, of the same family of popular heroes, undisciplined but richly endowed by nature, simple but beautiful, bold and brave—heroes who flash upon the chivalrous world like meteors, in the full brilliance of splendid accomplishment, unexampled from the start, run a swift course in valorous undertaking, finally achieve a special quest which was the object of their career, and then become decorative figures at Arthur's court.

The deeds of Perceval were best known to French readers from the vast poem (some 60,000 lines long) on the Grail Quest by Crestien and his continuators; to Germans from the parallel poem *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach; to the Welsh from the story of *Peredur* in the *Mabinogion*; while the English had before them not only the French romances concerning him, but also the native work of an unknown author which bears the title *Sir Perceval of Galles*. This work occupies a position apart from the French and German accounts of the hero by virtue of the fact that in it the Holy Grail is never mentioned, while in them Perceval is the one who achieves the quest. The author may have been influenced by the French *Perceval*; but he probably only recast earlier material, without, it would seem, departing from it in general outline or essential substance.

Sir Perceval is here represented as a nephew of King Arthur. His father has been maliciously slain by a knight at court, and his mother has thereupon fled to save her son, and brought him up in a solitary retreat, in the hope that he may never be entangled in chivalrous pursuits. But when fifteen years of age the youth accidentally encounters Gawain, Kay, and others of their fellows in rich array, and thinks one of them must surely be the great God of whom his mother has told them; but is courteously informed by Gawain that they are only followers of Arthur. The boy immediately determines to seek the King, and the next day abandons his forest home, leaves his mother behind disconsolate, and, clad in goat-skins, makes his way on a mare to the court, where he roughly demands knighthood. Arthur promises to dub him if he overcomes a Red Knight, who has just insulted the whole of his assembly by an act of open defiance. The youth rides after him at once and slays him with his spear. Eager to get the dead man's armour, he can think of no way except to burn him out.

Gawain, however shows him how to unlace the armour, and Perceval puts it on. Then, unwilling to return to court, he starts out on a career of adventure, in which his invariable success is a constant surprise. Before he returns, he has wedded a beautiful lady, Lufamour of Maiden-land, whom he rescues from distress, and has been reunited with his mother. The Red Knight, we learn, was his father's murderer. The tale is one of vengeance achieved.

The author of *Sir Perceval* was a minstrel, without much intelligence, and with little comprehension of the significance of his narrative. The poem is in 143 tail-rhyme strophes of sixteen lines each. It was probably written in the third quarter of the fourteenth century. Chaucer refers to the hero in *Sir Thopas*.

Apparently no effort was made to translate the whole of Crestien's *Perceval* into English, though there is clear evidence of the acquaintance of Englishmen with it. It was different with another important work of his, the *Ivain*, or *Le Chevalier au Lion*: this excellent poem appeared during the first half of the fourteenth century in a Northern English redaction of uncommon merit, under the title *Ywain and Gawain*.

The induction is very dramatic. Arthur is holding court at Carduel, when Calogrenant arrives and tells a group of assembled knights of an adventure from which he has just returned unsuccessful. When Arthur hears of it, he determines to undertake it himself; but Ywain, anxious to essay it alone, sets out unobserved in advance. Like Calogrenant, he is entertained on the way by a hospitable host, and is later directed by a giant herdsman to the famous fountain of Broceliande. There stands the most beautiful tree he has ever seen, in the branches of which birds are making melody. By pouring water on a rock underneath, he causes a terrible storm of wind and rain, which is followed by a calm. Soon a knight comes riding to the place and attacks the hero, but Ywain at last wounds him so severely that he takes to flight. Ywain follows in hot pursuit to the castle, and manages to get inside just in time, for the falling portcullis cuts his steed in two. He is sheltered by a lady, called Lunete, who conceals him until the anger of her mistress, Laudine, is appeased, and by her arts manages to bring about a reconciliation. Laudine even agrees to marry Ywain, who thereupon becomes the defender of the fountain, and in this capacity overcomes Kay when he arrives with Arthur to try his fortune.

Arthur and his knights are welcomed at the castle, and celebrate Ywain's marriage with its fair mistress. Eager, however, for further achievement, Ywain obtains permission from Laudine to set forth again, and receives from her a magic ring which will protect him in war. He promises to return within a year, but neglects to do so, incurs therefore the lady's displeasure, and loses his ring. As a result he goes mad, and lives for a time a wild life in the woods, supplied with food at a lonely hermitage. He is cured at last by a magic remedy, and after many valorous deeds returns to his lady's land and regains her favour.

Thus far *Ivain* presents us with the best example in French romance of the primitive Celtic journey to the Otherworld. It belongs in general to the type of so-called *imrama*, or Odysseys, of which the most familiar examples are the voyages of Bran and Mailduin. The latter part of the story, after the hero's madness and before the final reconciliation, was probably also present in the version that Crestien used.

Here Ywain is always accompanied by a helpful lion, whom he has rescued in a struggle with a serpent, and who affords him invaluable aid in extremities. One of the most interesting of his exploits is at the Castle of the Heavy Sorrow, where he releases a great band of distressed ladies from wretched captivity. Hearing that Lunete is suffering from a false accusation on his account, he vindicates her in a judical combat. At court, known only as the Knight of the Lion, he engages in a hard and long-continued fight with Gawain, who is also disguised by his armour. When at nightfall the two comrades recognise each other, they rejoice greatly. Each insists to the King that the other has won. This is the only episode in which Gawain plays an extended part ; but his presence is felt throughout. He is the knight Ywain loves best, as ever modest and courteous, true and loyal, a contrast to Kay. It is he who urges Ywain not to abandon for ease the chivalrous life. No lady in distress ever appealed to him in vain.

Ivain is generally regarded as Crestien's masterpiece. It reaches the high-water mark of French romance, and is peculiarly attractive by reason of the psychological discussions introduced. The English translation is tolerably close, but reveals the hand of an independent writer. In condensing his original (his work is about 2800 lines shorter) the English poet has betrayed a nature unlike that of the courtly Crestien. Though

less sophisticated and elegant, he is more straightforward. We get the impression of a skilful poet, strong and sincere, distinctly English in sympathies and religious in spirit.

Ywain, like Gawain, was a primitive hero of Arthurian romance, and like him was exalted by the chroniclers as an historical personage. Geoffrey implies that many tales of Ywain (Eventus) were current in his time; and he figures prominently in the *Mabinogion*, especially in the picturesque *Dream of Rhonabwy*. A short rhymed chronicle of Edward II.'s time exalts Ywain alone among Arthur's knights. Pers de Langtoft was also familiar with adventures ascribed to him. Robert of Brunne informs us that when Arthur was in France, Ywain opposed Modred's treasonable practices. And finally, Sir Thomas Gray, in his *Scalacronica*, states that it was he who killed Modred, and that he afterwards accompanied the King to Avalon. Elsewhere he is mentioned with Arthur and Gawain as resident in fairyland, and this for equally good romantic cause.

To Avalon, Layamon tells us, Arthur was carried to have his wounds healed by "Argante, an elf most beautiful," or Morgain the Fay. This divine being, the Irish war-goddess, the Morrigan, provided with new fairy attributes, preëminently the Fairy Queen of Arthurian romance, was also represented as the mistress of the Carlovingian hero Ogier the Dane, who likewise visited her in the Otherworld. With her was also associated in late story the hero Gerine. One is tempted to find these two names preserved in the title of a late but charming Scottish poem, *Eger and Grine* (*Grim*), which at bottom seems to be a story of the *Ywain* type, though amalgamated with other, particularly Scandinavian traditions, so that the fundamental situation is obscured, the names of the titular heroes even changing to Egace (Egils) and Grim within the poem itself.

Eger, hearing of a "venturous knight" who keeps "a forbidden country," rides thither in search of adventure. He crosses by strange passages a mysterious river, is speedily attacked by Sir Graysteel, a gigantic Red Knight from the splendid castle near by, and suffers ill at his hands. He returns

home afflicted and tells of his adventure. His companion, Grim, determines to try his luck, and rides three days through the wilderness to the land kept by the hostile knight. He succeeds where his companion failed, is well received by Dame Loosepaine, the beautiful lady of the land, through whose efforts his wounds are miraculously healed, and who finally agrees to wed him, despite the fact that she is even then mourning her previous husband's death. The marriage is celebrated with much minstrelsy and mirth.

We cannot delay now to discuss the diverse elements of the story. Evidently the chief intention of the author was to exalt the devotion to each other of the sworn brothers Eger and Grim, whom he imagined like Amis and Amiloun, famous, we shall see, for their friendship. Though the poem is a strange combination, it is nevertheless singularly attractive, and worthy of the great popularity it enjoyed in Scotland. The fight of Grim with Gray-steel seems to have interested mediæval readers most; we find most pleasant the scenes in the castle of the forbidden land, the Otherworld dwelling of the fay Loosepaine, which are delicately conceived and presented.

Before turning away from a consideration of the English romances dealing with Gawain and others particularly of his fellowship, it is worth while to repeat that this noble warrior was a peculiar favourite in England—the type of man, it appears, that Englishmen in the Middle Ages most admired, from whom they chose to take example. There is hardly an English chronicler but testifies to Gawain's fame. Layamon praises him as "the truest man on earth." Robert of Gloucester calls him "the flower of courtesy." Robert of Brunne remarks that "mickle honour of him ever men say." Gradually, it is evident, he lost in the minds of the people his fabulous character and became like ordinary men, but nobler. Holinshed regarded him simply as "a faithful gentleman, preëminent for his honour and loyal truth." Finally, in a late but valuable chap-book on his *Singular Adventures* at a fairy castle, he is represented as living "towards the latter end of the reign of Henry VIII.," and is described as "a man of some fortune and considerable curiosity, fond of enterprise, and insatiate

of knowledge, [who] travelled through the northern counties of England." His adventures at the fairy castle, we learn, were at that time "extant among the family writings, and still recorded by his posterity"—verily, a far fetch from the condition of one who in primitive myth rode a magic horse, Gringalet, wielded the magic sword Excalibur, waxed in strength till noonday, and waned steadily thereafter till dark—a prince of the Otherworld!

The Cycle of Sir Lancelot

The legend of Lancelot, as we have it, is less primitive than those of Tristram, Gawain, Perceval, and Ywain. Before 1164, however, there were so many tales current in France about Lancelot that Crestien then mentioned him in *Erec* as one of the three most famous heroes of the Round Table; and before 1173 (the date of *Ivain*) he wrote a long poem on one episode of his career. Just where Crestien got his material for this work we are not certain; but it has been recently made probable that he had before him an elaborate French romance concerning the hero, which is preserved in a German redaction. That this was written, moreover, was only a chance.

In February 1194, an Anglo-Norman knight, Hugh de Morville (who has been incorrectly identified with one of the four murderers of Thomas à Becket in 1170), was sent to Vienna as a hostage for the release of Richard I., who had for a year been detained as a prisoner by Leopold, Duke of Austria. He and his fellows were given leave to return home after the death of Leopold at the end of the same year. To while away the time, we are informed, he took with him a favourite book, the lost romance of Lancelot. By good fortune, this fell into the hands of a German poet, Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, who translated it in 9444 lines of fluent verse. From the evidence his poem affords, we can see that the original was a biographical romance of considerable length, which related the adventures of the hero from his birth to his marriage. That it was written in England, one cannot assert; but, at all events, it

was in circulation there, and highly esteemed by the nobility, during the twelfth century.

There is nothing to show, however, that Lancelot ever became a really popular hero in England. He was never at any time the delight of the whole folk, as Gawain was. We have no account of his doings in English that is not apparently based on some form or other of the bewildering prose romance that grew up in the thirteenth century, and immediately won enormous favour. This, no doubt, was the "book" that Chaucer informs us women in his time held "in full great reverence"—one of the Continental productions to which Robert of Brunne referred in 1338:

> These great books, so fair language,
> Written and spoken of France's usage,
> That never were written through Englishmen.

For Robert asserts that even in his time his countrymen had few prose books about Arthur's "noble deeds of honour" in comparison with the large number in foreign tongues. In truth, there did then exist abroad vast romances lauding Lancelot. In the thirteenth century was written a Dutch poem concerning him, only fragmentarily preserved, and yet over 47,000 lines long. And the French prose romance was reproduced in German, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. It was a prose *Lancelot* from which Dante, in a familiar and beloved passage, represents Paolo and Francesca as "reading for delight how love constrained" the hero. "Many times," says Francesca in hell, "that reading urged our eyes, and took the colour from our faces."

The prose *Lancelot* dealt with the later history of King Arthur. In its vulgate form it consisted of several branches, first the *Lancelot* proper, dealing not only with the life and adventures of the hero himself, but including also those of Gawain, Agravain, and other knights; then the Quest of the Holy Grail; and finally the Death of Arthur. The compiler was familiar with Crestien's poem, and used it as the basis of that part of his work which deals with the capture of Guinevere. But he had access to other stories

about Lancelot, and inserted a vast deal of extraneous matter unconnected with him. The whole is sometimes appropriately called the *Livre d'Artus*, a name which would have been much more suitable to Malory's composition than that of the *Morte Darthur*, which the writer gave it.

Two features of Lancelot's history will always remain particularly conspicuous—his *enfances* and his relations with Guinevere. There were many heroes of the Perceval type, brought up in solitude by mortal mothers, who early won renown; but Lancelot owed his training to a supernatural lady, who, with special affection, prepared him in her own country for a distinguished career. The Lady of the Lake was a beneficent fay, who chose to educate a mortal youth on whom she laid her love, and who watched over her favourite throughout his life with careful solicitude. In respect to his education, he thus stands apart from other youthful heroes, except perhaps The Fair Unknown, who appears in some versions as enjoying a similar honour, and in various ways duplicates Lancelot's life.

Lancelot, however, is chiefly remembered as the lover of Guinevere, whom he served ever with unwavering devotion, to the final ruin of the court. The chief incident of their amour is the queen's rescue by her lover from the power of Meleagant (cf. Malory, xix.), who has carried her off to "the land from which no stranger returns"—that is, the Otherworld, the abode of the dead. There are several parallels to this adventure in Celtic story, and perhaps originally it was not Lancelot who brought it to an end. Yet it was definitely attached to him in French romance, and he became famous largely by reason of the part therein that he was given to play. This adventure is the central incident of Crestien's *Conte de la Charette*.

A stranger knight one festival May-day rides up to Arthur's court, salutes the King while he is still at table, and demands a boon, which, like that of the Irish knight in *Tristan*, is granted before it is heard. The knight declares that he holds many of the ladies of Arthur's land prisoners in his domain, and that he will free them all if there is any one of the King's followers who can

overthrow him in single combat. If the trial is accepted and he wins, he shall have the Queen and his opponent to take away with him to captivity. The petulant Kay demands a chance to try the fight, and the King agrees. But in a neighbouring wood, where the contest takes place privately, Kay is badly beaten, and he and the Queen are carried off. Lancelot and Gawain arrive on the scene too late to prevent the disaster, but set out in pursuit. At a cross-roads they take separate paths. Lancelot, however, soon meets misfortune, for his horse breaks a leg, and he must needs trudge on wearily in heavy armour. A little dwarf in a cart overtakes him and offers him a ride. Lancelot wavers, because to ride in such a vehicle is derogatory to his dignity ; but the thought of Guinevere's danger impels him even to this ignominious act. His decision, however, brings him speedy chagrin. Gawain, whom he presently meets again, rebukes him for his indecorous position ; the inmates of the castle at which they soon arrive treat him patronisingly ; people along the road jeer at him ; and finally, when, after various adventures, in which he shows himself always a faithful and superb knight, he comes to the castle whither the Queen has been taken, and rescues her from the power of her captor, he receives only a sneer for his pains ; for Guinevere, like every one else in the land apparently, has heard of her lover's dishonour and deems him now unworthy of her. Lancelot, bewildered, does not stop to justify himself, or to narrate the beguilements and blunders of his journey, but rushes away disconsolate to the woods. When after a few days he returns repentant, he finds that Meleagant has locked up his mistress again. He seeks her prison-chamber, effects an entrance, is granted forgiveness, spends hours of joy with her, and departs unobserved. The next day he meets Meleagant, overthrows him, and makes him promise to appear at Arthur's court a twelvemonth later. He departs with the Queen, Kay, and the prisoners, and journeys homeward, meeting Gawain by the way. Lancelot, however, does not reach Cardigan with the rest. He yields to the supplication of one of Meleagant's disguised subordinates, separates himself from the party, to free, as he supposes, a distressed lady, falls into an ambush, and is imprisoned. All at court, being very fearful because of his delayed arrival, seek news of him everywhere, but in vain. At last they proclaim a tourney, the victor to have the fairest damsel of Arthur's court as his prize. By good chance, the lady who is Lancelot's custodian while this is taking place is minded to free him for a week, and the hero, giving a pledge to return, makes for the tourney in disguise. He is everywhere victorious, to the great astonishment of all. Guinevere, however, suspects him of being her lover, and sends word to him to allow himself to be beaten. When he thereupon meekly accepts his opponent's blows, she withdraws her order, and he puts them all to shame. He then returns secretly to his sorry dungeon. There he pines until the end of the twelvemonth is at hand, when Meleagant appears at Cardigan and again boastfully demands the

Queen, feeling sure of winning with Lancelot absent. But he is deceived. The hero, by the aid of his fairy guardian, having been freed, restored to vigour, and equipped with good armour, suddenly appears, challenges and slays Meleagant, and is rewarded by the Queen's renewed favour.

Lancelot here appears as the burden-bearer of a theory. Crestien did not begin to write of him thus of his own accord. The subject was suggested by Marie de Champagne, who thought it would admirably serve to promote her favourite ideas of courtly love. The poet, however, entered into the plan with little heart, and the result was unsatisfactory. Wearying of his task, he handed it over to a friend (Godefroi de Lagny) to finish, and wrote of Ywain instead. Great is the contrast between the type of love presented in these two poems: the love of Provence contrasts markedly with the love of Wales.

Even in early forms of the story of Tristram and Ysolt we get hints of the new conceptions of courtly love that were soon to pervade mediæval romance. Thomas endeavoured "l'estorie embelir, Que as amanz deive plaisir." But on the whole there is little that is conventional in the hero's and heroine's relations; their acts are not regulated by formal doctrines, nor are they the slaves of codified rules; they are not conscious of the part they are playing, not always wondering whether they are faithful to what they profess. Tristram had not to be ever on the alert to consider the red-tape of love theory, to avoid incurring his lady's displeasure; Ysolt never assumed towards him the attitude of captious disdain. She had, to be sure, her fits of jealousy and indignation—as, for example, when she learns indirectly of her lover's second marriage, or later when Tristram flees from his foes and leaves her in their power—but these are only realistic touches, which show her to be a human being, a woman of passionate and impulsive nature. It is in Lancelot that we have the first courtly lover of British romance, and Guinevere is the first to pursue a well-regulated attachment.

In *Le Morte Arthur*, a pleasing poem (in eight-line ballad-like stanzas, with alternate rhymes) dating from the end of the

fourteenth century, the author begins by recounting the charming and pathetic tale of "the Maid of Ascolot," and her unrequited love for Lancelot, which Tennyson has so happily rewritten in the *Idylls of the King*.

The poem tells also how Lancelot in disguise champions Guinevere when, because of an unjust accusation, she is condemned to be burned, and overcomes her fierce accuser, much to the relief of all at court, who fear she is guilty, and dare not risk their lives in her defence. Through this valiant deed the hero is restored to favour with Guinevere, who had previously sent him away in anger, and enjoys fully the satisfactions of love. Soon, however, Agravain, Gawain's brother, accuses him to the King, and the lovers are entrapped together. Lancelot boldly defends himself against his opponents, slaying all but Modred, who escapes by flight. Accompanied by many followers, he makes his way to Joyous Garde, the castle the King has given him, and thither after a struggle later brings Guinevere, thus saving her from being burned for her guilt. Unfortunately, in this exploit he has been forced to slay Gawain's two brothers, and has incurred thereby his implacable hatred. Arthur besieges Joyous Garde unsuccessfully; but finally, at the command of the Pope, Lancelot yields back Guinevere, whom the King agrees to pardon. Lancelot withdraws to his Continental dominions, desiring peace; but Arthur, urged on by the revengeful Gawain, follows after to continue the strife. While thus engaged, he hears of Modred's treachery, and returns to defend his queen and throne.

The final scenes of the poem we shall discuss presently in another section dealing with Arthur's death. The likeness of this narrative to Malory's is due to their having had a common French prose source.

The only other native poem on Lancelot is the Scottish *Lancelot of the Laik*, an incomplete and insignificant production in heroic couplets of the late fifteenth century. The prologue shows that the author was under the influence of the Court of Love ideas, then beginning to wane. He represents himself as falling asleep one April morning in a beautiful garden, whereupon the God of Love appears to him in a vision, reproves him for his futile complaining, and bids him compose a treatise "of love, or arms, or some other thing." When he wakes, he naturally enough chooses to narrate of Lancelot in love—how,

during the wars between Arthur and Galiot, he achieves wonders by the Queen's inspiration. This served the poet as a means of evincing his own devotion to his lady. In addition, he seized the opportunity, afforded by some hints in his original, for a tedious discourse on the duties of kings, in which we seem to have allusions to abuses in Scotland during the reigns of James III. and James IV. Each "book" has a lyrical prelude.

It was Malory, however, who made Lancelot the ideal knight in modern English eyes. As portrayed by him, Lancelot is assuredly a hero whom our hearts "give greatly unto." We accept as just Sir Hector's eulogy:

> Ah, Lancelot, he said, thou wert head of all Christian knights; and now, I daresay, said Sir Hector, thou Sir Lancelot, there thou liest, that thou wert never matched of earthly knight's hand; and thou wert the courtliest knight that ever bare shield; and thou wert the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse; and thou wert the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman; and thou wert the kindest man that ever strake with sword; and thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights; and thou wert the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest.

No wonder there accompanied his death "weeping and dolour out of measure." Lancelot was, in Tennyson's words,

> A princely knight
> Whose blended life brought weal and woe
> Unto his king.

The Quest of the Holy Grail

A consideration of the legends of Perceval and Lancelot leads us naturally to the history of the Holy Grail; for Perceval was formerly the knight who achieved the Quest, while Lancelot later was represented as the father of Galahad, who usurped Perceval's place.

The importance of the Grail legend to students of English

literature does not consist in the number of versions preserved in the English language—for, apart from Malory, they are almost confined to a few accounts of the life of Joseph of Arimathea—but rather in the circumstances of the legend's growth and development in Britain. The problem of its history is too complicated ever to admit of a final solution; but the plausible view is now held by competent scholars that the various parts were first welded together in Britain, and that in its later transformation and perpetuation much is due to the stimulus of an English king, Henry II. At all events, it is undeniable that what is known as the "Early History," telling of Joseph of Arimathea, is at bottom a legend of the conversion of Britain, that the chief scenes of the story throughout are in Britain, that the characters belong peculiarly to British story, and that certain of the best versions of the Quest were fashioned to exalt the English dynasty of Angevin kings. Through the stories of the Grail, the land of Britain was glorified as the first seat of the Church of Christ, and the abiding-place for ages of most precious relics of His cross and passion. By virtue of this legend Glastonbury Abbey became a shrine of British glory.

To most English-speaking people knowledge of the Grail is limited to information drawn from the *Morte Darthur*; but Malory's account is simply an abridgment, often contradictory and obscure, of a French prose romance which was itself very far from the original. Three hundred years before Malory, the legend had been elaborated at great length and with much skill in Old French poems which (in the original, or in translation) remain to this day its purest embodiment. These works of the twelfth century, in their turn, are based on material that was ancient at that time, primitive heathen myth, universal folklore, and Christian legend. These various elements were gathered together, many separate pieces, into an organised whole. The structure was continuously modified; new architects over and over again fashioned it anew; and the process still goes on under our very eyes.

The first achiever of the Grail was not Galahad, but Perceval, some of whose deeds we have seen recorded in an English poem which contains no mention of the sacred chalice. Other exploits of his may be found in the Welsh tale of Peredur in the *Mabinogion.* A much more extensive narrative of his career, based, the poet tells us, on a book given him by the Crusader Count Philip of Flanders, was begun by Crestien, but left unfinished by him at his death, about 1189. Crestien wrote nearly 10,000 lines, but these are almost wholly occupied with the ordinary material of romance—adventures of all sorts, in which the Grail is seldom referred to, let alone explained. The episodes are such as appear constantly in the matter of Britain, and the general idea of the quest of a grail (Lat. *gradalis*, dish), or magic vessel of wonderful power, is likewise paralleled in Celtic mythic tales. These episodes are united by a slender bond. The winning of the Grail, and the unspelling of the castle where it is guarded, are no more intimately connected with the rest than the culminating adventure of any romantic hero with the others he performs; no more, for example, than the rescue by The Fair Unknown of the lady in serpent shape whom two magicians kept in bespelled Snowdon. In each case, the simple, untutored hero, reared in solitude, by virtue of a favoured lineage and a marvellous nature successfully performs various undertakings before he is brought face to face with one of greater significance, with whose final accomplishment—the rescue of a castle and a district from a spell—he seems to achieve his foreordained mission, and to satisfy the hopes of those who have guided him throughout his whole career.

Crestien gives us but slight information about the Grail, and few indications of how his story was to terminate. The master's work, however, found several continuators, whose conceptions, though on the whole they followed the same lines, were different in certain respects not only from his but from one another's. Through their efforts, within fifty or sixty years after Crestien's death, the *Conte del Graal* had become about 60,000 lines long.

Perceval is throughout the chief hero, but the deeds of Gawain are almost as important to the narrators, and the work is not unlike a secular romance of the ordinary Arthurian type.

The original object of the quest, the heathen Celtic talisman, a grail with food-producing power and unspelling might, had, earlier than in Crestien, become identified with a sacred Christian relic, the *Holy* Grail, the dish in which Joseph of Arimathea was supposed to have caught the blood that flowed from the body of our Lord after He had been pierced by Longinus' spear; and this idea soon brought about a complete transformation of the tale. The better to explain how this precious relic got to Britain, a long story, in which the life of Joseph of Arimathea was outlined, was prefixed to the narrative of Perceval. Material for this, probably in Latin, was no doubt readily accessible. Legends of the conversion of Britain by Joseph had grown up in Britain independently, and were of such a nature as to be easily combined with the tale of British heroes.

It was in the hands of an Anglo-Norman knight, Robert de Boron, that the chivalrous, secular romance of Perceval seems first to have been adequately united in literary treatment with the pious ecclesiastical legend of Joseph. In the last quarter of the twelfth century, he planned and, at least in part, composed a trilogy of romances, the first of which dealt with Joseph of Arimathea, the second with Merlin, and the third was to deal with Perceval. The poet's most novel idea was that of introducing "the fiend-born necromancer" Merlin, whom he represented as fashioning the celebrated Round Table in the similitude of a table on which Joseph, while a missionary in the East, was accustomed to display the Grail for the comfort and sustenance of his followers. Robert's plan was apparently to unite all the divergent traditions into an inclusive Grail cycle, and this in a measure he accomplished. But he was not skilful enough to make his work definitive: it influenced others, but by them was at the same time transformed. Robert, it will be observed, was

a knight, not a monk, not a member of any religious order. He was a pious man of simple faith, but no theologian. Indeed, almost the whole developed legend of the Grail Quest seems to have been the work of laymen. The Church uttered neither praise nor blame. The legend grew of itself, at once secular and religious, teaching no important doctrine, but subversive of none, tending to righteousness and respect for Holy Church, but not scholastic or dogmatic in tone. The Church let it alone.

Crestien and Robert, it is clear, were but two of many who in the half-century about 1200 were busy elaborating the Grail stories, which, once started, filled the minds of men with extraordinary swiftness. An immense body of Grail literature was then produced, not only in Latin and French, but also in other languages of Europe. One of these foreign productions, the German *Parzival*, merits particular consideration, because it is a noble poem in itself, because it attests the existence of a similar work in its French original, and because that original was evidently written by a Continental supporter of the house of Anjou, who had political aims in its production. Its author, Wolfram von Eschenbach († *c.* 1220), was the greatest writer of mediæval Germany; the greatest writer of the Middle Ages, it is claimed, before Dante. Wolfram also was a layman, a man of little learning, but a broad-minded, sympathetic man and a poet of unusual power. This one can safely say, whatever view one may hold with regard to his sources. He tells us that he based his work on a French poem by a Provençal Guyot (Kyôt). Scepticism has long reigned regarding this person, of whom and of whose poem all other trace has disappeared; but scholars are now disposed to accept Wolfram's statement, confirmed as it is by internal evidence, and to transfer much of the praise usually accorded to Wolfram to Guyot. The latter knew Crestien, but deprecated his work. He viewed his material in a way quite unlike that of his great rival. He wrote to please the Angevins at the time of their ascendency, and connected the English royal house with the lineage of Perceval, to flatter its pride. Guyot

was a far more tolerant and deeply religious person than Crestien. He had lived in the East, and was full of the Crusading spirit. He believed in the independent dignity of the order of Knights Templars, in whose image he portrays the Grail knights. The early history of Joseph he neglects, but in compensation he adds the story of Lohengrin, whom he represents as the son of Parzival, and introduces Prester John.

With the sudden fall of the Angevin dynasty, a work so decidedly partisan to them would find little favour in France, and therefore be neglected and disappear. Fortunately, before this, it fell into the German poet's hands, and formed the basis of that admirable work which in our time inspired Wagner to what some regard as his greatest achievement.

Robert de Boron's poems and other accessible Grail matter were in the thirteenth century elaborated in prose. This transition to prose is accompanied by two fundamental changes—the exaltation of the previously insignificant Galahad to the rôle of Grail hero and the complete sway of Christian symbolism. With Galahad the ideal of asceticism enters the romance. The human, loving Perceval is relegated to second place in the Quest, and the noble Gawain, thought too worldly, must needs be held up as a dreadful example.

The tangle of Grail material that grew up in the thirteenth century is extremely bewildering. Everything that had any bearing on the subject, or could in any way be connected with it, was dragged in. The different versions are legion. Hardly two of the manuscripts are alike. Above the thicket of versions and redactions one commanding figure rises, one who is always associated with the late development of the cycle, namely, Walter Map, to whom is ascribed the composition of what is known as the *Queste del St. Graal*, part of the enormous *Grand St. Graal*, which tells the whole story.

Map probably had no connection with the cycle; and his name is kept here chiefly for convenience. But if it be true, as the mediæval scribe said, that "Walter Map made the book for

the love of his lord, King Henry, who had the story translated from Latin into French," we owe both the king and his counsellor a debt of gratitude. Henry II. had much to gain by identifying himself and his family with this British legend, for he thus influenced the Celtic races of his dominion in his favour, and he sought means to oppose what he thought to be the overweening presumption of the Roman Church. He undertook to rebuild the Abbey of Glastonbury on a magnificent scale; and it was doubtless no accident that in 1191 the tombs of Arthur and Guinevere were discovered there, to the discomfiture of the Welsh, who believed that Arthur was to return. The tales of Joseph in Britain were not cherished by the Popes.

Map is particularly connected with the Lancelot branch of the Grail cycle. This branch was a late-comer into the great romance, and it required a good many subtle shifts to make it fit the rest. At first Galahad was represented as the direct descendant of Joseph of Arimathea, begotten in Britain by command of God. Lancelot was simply his godfather when he was dubbed at Arthur's court. To enhance the reputation of both, this connection was made more intimate, and Lancelot was represented as the real father of the saintly youth, the offspring of his union with the daughter of the Grail-King Pelles. The Lancelot stories were permeated with an atmosphere of secular gallantry totally at variance with the monastic conceptions of the purely Grail cycle. But this was a matter of small account to the redactor. He told with all its wanton charm the love-story of Lancelot and Guinevere, but he atoned for this by attributing to it the final catastrophe of the Round Table, making it intervene between the achieving of the Quest and the Death of Arthur.

The Grail-Lancelot cycle having become a gigantic and unwieldy body of romance, the need of shortening was soon apparent, and various contractions appeared even as early as the thirteenth century. It was one of these that Malory still further reduced to form Books xiii. to xvii. of the *Morte Darthur*. Malory's account deals particularly with the Quest. A little

before his time, about 1450, the early history of the *Grand St. Graal* was laboriously turned into English couplets by one Henry Lovelich, a London skinner. The poem, which is preserved in a unique and fragmentary manuscript, contains almost 24,000 lines, and yet the author does not get beyond the conversion of Britain.

In the first quarter of the sixteenth century several Lives of Joseph of Arimathea were printed in England. But the most valuable English version of the Joseph legend is that written at the time of the alliterative revival about the middle of the fourteenth century. Only about 700 lines are now preserved in a unique manuscript, and the author is unknown. The poem deals with the incidents of Joseph's life at Sarras, relying for information on the *Grand St. Graal.* It is interesting not because of the originality of its material, or the skill of the author's presentation, but as evidence of the appreciation by a patriotic English poet of a legend that was thought to honour his native land.

It would be pleasant to quote passages from Malory in which are nobly pictured impressive scenes in the history of the Quest (such, for example, as the appearance of Galahad at court, his seating himself in the Siege Perilous, the vision of the Grail, the heroic avowing of the knights, and their solemn procession outward from Camelot)—but there is no need. To every reader the *Morte Darthur* is, or should be, a familiar book.

If we review the development of the Grail cycle, we see how bewilderingly in so short a time a secular romance of adventure was altered into an elaborate Christian allegory. The reason for the final transformation is apparent: it lies in the change of the clerical attitude towards the principles of chivalry and their expression in the romances. We recall Roger Ascham's severe condemnation of the Arthurian romances on the ground of their immorality. We recall how Tennyson characterises them as

> Touch'd by the adulterous finger of a time
> That hover'd betwixt war and wantonness.

And we can but admit that there is some reason in these reproaches.

The story of Tristram and Ysolt is the apotheosis of illicit love; that of Lancelot and Guinevere the glorification of infidelity in marriage; even Arthur, the governing spirit of the whole fellowship of the Round Table, was accused of incest. Outwardly, of course, the romances were highly moral. In the course of time the pagan British tales had been made over to suit Christian readers; the ancient warriors had come to be presented as pious adherents of the Church, who went regularly to mass, appealed to God and the Virgin in time of need, and were saved from danger by divine interposition. All this, however, was superficial. Beneath the veneer of ecclesiastical observance lurked conceptions of life that were all too clearly opposed to the precepts of Christianity. Yet these tales of Britain were fascinating to the clergy as well as to laymen, and no open war was ever waged against them. "Li conte de Bretaigne sont si vain et plaisant," said Jean Bodel, and in their vanity and pleasantness lay the secret of their unopposed success. But pious people at last grew alarmed at their popularity, thinking that they drew the minds of men away from the contemplation of holy writ and encouraged worldliness, and they tried to alter them to serve a righteous end: in the story of the Holy Grail they made the knights of King Arthur the embodiment of Christian ideals, Christian pilgrims struggling to reach "the spiritual city." Thus the "vain" tales were finally transformed, and given deep religious significance. The Grail-Quest remains still a symbol of the highest human endeavour.

The Cycle of Merlin

The consideration of Merlin conducts us back from the romantic adventures of Arthur's knights, based on popular story and legend, to the events of pseudo-history as outlined by Geoffrey, from the narrative of Arthur's closing years to that of his youth. The Merlin legend is a bewildering one, but in its general development not too difficult to trace.

Among the Welsh, before the flourishing of romance, Merlin

(Myrrdhin) had won repute as a bard and a prophet, probably also as a beguiled lover. By Geoffrey he was perhaps first connected with Arthur, and exalted as an enchanter. Identifying the Welsh Myrrdhin with the Ambrosius of Nennius, and borrowing incidents from the latter, and from elsewhere, he evolved a new character.

Geoffrey represents Vortiger as in great perplexity because of his inability to lay solid foundation for a strong tower he is desirous to build. Whatever the builders do one day, the earth swallows up the next, so as to leave no trace of their work. Magicians inform him that if he sprinkles the stones and cement with the blood of a youth who never had a father, the foundations will become firm. Messengers find at Caermarthen a boy whose birth is mysterious: his mother has conceived him in a nunnery, how she knows not. The messengers decide that he has been begotten by an incubus, and is therefore fitted for the desired sacrifice. But the boy so confounds them by his extraordinary wisdom that they think him divinely inspired. They conduct him to the King, to whom he reveals the cause of the tower's instability, and, to the bewilderment of all, foretells strange happenings to come.

Merlin as an enchanter plays a conspicuous part in Uter's deception of Ygerna, and in the removal of the rocks from Ireland to build the Giant's Dance. For these the "historian" got his suggestion in popular tales. Previous Celtic enchanters, like Manannan and Mongan, gave him hints that he utilised for his purpose. Thanks to the fame of Geoffrey's book, the exploits of Merlin's prototypes were gradually transferred to him, and he came to stand as the preëminent representative of Celtic magic.

Following the outline of the *Historia*, and with the aid of intermediate narratives, Robert de Boron managed to give a consecutive account of the life of this extraordinary figure. The scholastic explanation of Merlin's mysterious birth he replaces by the ecclesiastical one of demonic origin, and in his hands Merlin becomes the offspring of the devil, who through him hopes to

subvert mankind. The plan of the demons is, however, circumvented through the child's immediate christening by the holy man, Blaise, who has had the boy's mother in his care, and he becomes a force for good instead of for evil. Like all youths of similar supernatural origin (Sir Gowghter, for example), he is soon discovered to be "marvellously witted," preternaturally wise. When still a babe, he speaks words of comfort to his mother, and promises to shield her from harm. He is only eighteen months old when he defends her against an unjust accusation of adultery, and secures her release by convicting the judge's own mother of secret sin in his conception. Before he is five, he has exhibited his mysterious wisdom to the astonished Vortiger. Thereupon he becomes the chief counsellor of the king and his successors, whom he repeatedly enables to outwit their enemies. As the omniscient and omnipotent guardian of the young Arthur, he behaves like Odin to the hero Sigmund in the North. It is he who arranges the sword-test by which the supposed foster-child of Antor reveals himself of Uter's blood; he plans and helps to bring about the King's marriage with Guinevere, daughter of Leodegan, aiding him and his followers constantly by his knowledge of shape-shifting and enchantment.

Robert's poem became the basis of a long, and for the most part very monotonous, prose romance, in which the account of Arthur's wars with his rivals and Saxon foes is drearily prolonged to the time of Lancelot's birth, the work being apparently intended as an introduction to the romance of that hero. Despite its tediousness, this work was very popular in Europe, and was translated into several languages. A fourteenth-century version was turned into English, but so mechanically as to be insignificant. From some version of the French prose romance Malory "reduced" the interesting sections that make up his first four books, ennobling it by his fine phrasing. The splendid distinction of his style appears heightened when compared with that of his fellow, the servile translator of the whole, or, indeed, with the tiresome metrical version prepared about 1450 by the

skinner Lovelich, whose trade seems to have occupied him too little. The writers of the fifteenth century (like Lydgate, for example) were surely long-winded enough ; but if the poet's merit were determined by his perseverance, Lovelich would even then have been entitled to fame. His version of the Grail legend, we recall, was some 24,000 lines long. His *Merlin*, though also unfinished, includes about 28,000. These works are in unique manuscripts. Who can tell how much else he wrote?

Long before, at the close of the thirteenth century, the developed French romance, in a form not yet quite determined, served an English poet of much greater power as material for an extensive work which he called *Arthur and Merlin*. Over 10,000 lines of this poem are preserved, and yet it is far from complete. It is written in couplets of four accents, which the author very deftly turns. Because of a general likeness in poetic treatment and in the nature of the material embodied, it is generally believed that this poem and *King Alisaunder*, of which we shall later treat, are the work of one individual, who wrote in Kent or thereabouts. Notable among the agreements in style between them is the frequent use of agreeable lyrical passages describing the seasons, or phases of outdoor life, as preludes to different sections of the story. Both poems abound in descriptions of battles, for which the author had an evident predilection. His spirited style and enthusiasm will not prevent a modern reader from finding them dull. The Carlovingian epic supplies such struggles a plenty : we pass them by in Arthurian romance.

We linger more willingly over Merlin's *amour*. There is evidence in Geoffrey's (?) *Vita Merlini*, that previously in Welsh tradition a story was told about Myrrdhin's love for a fay, with whom he perhaps lived for a time in the Otherworld, a story not unlike that of Ywain. This tradition, it may be, furnished a basis for the very widespread narrative of his relations with Niniane. The air-castle in which she imprisons him was of a kind familiar to every reader of British tales—an Otherworld creation, where a beautiful lady could keep a valiant knight enthralled, powerless to

pass out, submissive to her commands. The story is laden with the alluring mystery that gives the tone to Breton romance. Tennyson has treated it with originality and power.

It was natural that in the Middle Ages Merlin should be confused with the enchanter Virgil. In an English version of the *Seven Sages* he takes Virgil's place; and sometimes the two appear to have exchanged achievements. In the Middle English romance of *Herod and Merlin* we have a variant of the story of Vortiger's tower, the British king yielding his place to Herod.

But Merlin the mage would probably never have won his permanent fame in Britain had he not been reputed also to be a prophet. His history appealed to the English forcibly because they believed that he had had (perhaps still had) a local habitation in their own land, and was identified with the nation's history. When Geoffrey published the rhapsodic and indistinct utterances in his Prophecies, his contemporaries scrutinised them carefully. Finding that the predictions regarding past events had been exactly fulfilled, they naïvely concluded that those pertaining to the future would also come to pass. Indeed, men were slow to abandon the folly of trying to elucidate this imposture. As late as 1641 Thomas Heywood wrote a *Life of Merlin, surnamed Ambrosius, his Prophecies and Predictions interpreted; and their Truth made Good by our English Annals.* Defoe tells us that the fortune-tellers and prophets who flourished at the time of the Great Plague in 1665 were wont to display the head of Merlin as a sign. His name has been constantly used by astrologers and modern prophets to promote the sale of their pamphlets. But perhaps Merlin's influence on actual events is most evident in the way his authority was used to keep alive the "British hope" among the Welsh. The monk of Malmesbury who wrote the Life of Edward III. remarks at the year 1315 that, in consequence of a prophecy of Merlin's predicting the recovery of England by King Arthur, the Welsh raised frequent revolts. An historian lacks imagination who fails to recognise the importance of romantic sentiment in a national struggle for independence.

The Death of Arthur

A constant tendency is manifest in mediæval England to add verisimilitude to Arthurian story, to transform romance into history. Vagueness in the characters' ancestry and remoteness of scene yielded to strict genealogical precision and definite local situation. Thus transformed, the ancient tales were gladly perpetuated, and served, the people thought, to establish national dignity. On the revival of English self-consciousness in the fourteenth century a new effort was made to exalt the early heroes of Britain, and the old alliteration seemed appropriate to patriotic poets for the recounting of their warlike deeds.

Of the Middle English alliterative poems, one of the most interesting is the *Morte Arthure* (not to be confused with the work of the same title in stanzas, already referred to, which is chiefly concerned with Lancelot, though it necessarily therefore tells of the closing years of Arthur's life), a production probably of the north-west of England, in 4346 long lines without rhyme. In it occur allusions to historical events in 1327, when Edward II. was deposed and Edward III. nominated in his place by a Parliament held at Westminster.

The author follows in the main the "historical" account of Arthur from the time he set out against Lucius to his final fight with Modred. He was not, however, confined to the various chronicles accessible to him, but utilised also material from developed romance. Lancelot and Ywain, for example, figure prominently in the story, by name at least, though they bear faint likeness to their portraits in French. Modred is one of the central characters, and not an out-and-out villain. He is loath to remain at home when Arthur goes abroad. When he sees Gawain dead, he bursts into tears, and praises him in irreproachable words. In fact, the chief interest of the poem attaches to his final struggle with the King.

Arthur has crossed the Alps, and has been offered the crown of Rome by the Pope, when he dreams of Fortune, "a beautiful duchess," and her revolving wheel. At first he rejoices in her favour, but is later crushed by the wheel's weight. This dream, wise men explain to him, foretells his death. And when a pilgrim announces Modred's treasonable deeds, he at once returns. In a stirring, lifelike passage is described a sea fight near Southampton, in which Modred is overcome. Excellently are pictured the scenes of the ensuing conflicts between him and the King. In the final terrible struggle the splendid swords Clarent and Caliburn clash together in rivalry. The contest is mighty. But at last Modred falls vanquished. Not long, however, does the King survive. When he feels himself failing, he has himself borne to Glastonbury, "the Isle of Avalon" (!), and there, solemnly confessing his sins, departs this world, forgiving and forgiven. "The baronage of Britain, then, bishops and others, repair them to Glastonbury with rueful hearts, to bury there the bold king, and bring him to the earth, with all suitable worship and wealth. Strongly the bells they ring and requiems sing, masses and matins with mourning notes; religious robed in their rich copes, pontiffs and prelates in precious weeds; dukes and douzepeers in their dole-coats, countesses kneeling and clasping their hands, ladies languishing and downcast in face; all were busked in black, brides-women and others, that appeared at the sepulchre, with falling tears; was never so sorrowful a sight seen in their time! Thus ends King Arthur, as authors allege, that was of Hector's blood, the King's son of Troy, and of Sir Priam, the prince praised on earth; for thence brought the Britons all his bold elders into Britain the broad, as the *Brut* tells."

The author of this *Morte Arthure* was a thorough-going Englishman and a genuine poet. His simple, sturdy qualities had never been neutralised by foreign sophistications. None of the feebleness manifest in the degenerate romances of subservient minstrels appears in his vigorous lines. Here, on the contrary, is the power of originality, the charm of freshness. The author evinces a sense of humour and a love of nature. We find in his poem attempts at characterisation surpassing those of the ordinary romancer. Reality is the poet's watchword, battle his boast. His part was to revivify and naturalise the "historical" narrative, and to portray the personages in the light of his Saxon ideals. He wrote with much the same spirit as Layamon, with like energising power of imagination and picturesque phrase.

A curious treatment of the story of Arthur's closing years is found in a short Southern poem (642 lines, in couplets) of the second half of the fourteenth century, known only by the name of *Arthur*. It is an insertion in a Latin chronicle of the kings of Britain, the writer, in his enthusiasm for Arthur, feeling impelled to quit his dull Latin prose for a little, while he bade those of his readers that "loved honour," to hearken "of King Arthur and his labour." We are reminded of the poetic entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

The scenes inevitably first evoked in one's memory by the mention of Arthur's death are not, however, the would-be historical but the plainly mythical and romantic—the scenes that Tennyson has made familiar to all. These, with all their gleam and haze, were wonderfully described, ages before the Laureate's time, in Malory, in the earlier stanzaic *Morte Arthure*, and in the ultimate source of both, the romance of *Lancelot* in thirteenth-century French prose, some copy of which was used also by the alliterative poet. In Malory's version the story of Arthur's forthfaring is well known; but it will not be amiss here to repeat part of that chapter which tells "How King Arthur commanded to cast his sword Excalibur in the water, and how he was delivered unto ladies in a barge."

Arthur is at "a little chapel not far from the seaside," at the point of death, even as Gawain's spirit had warned him in a dream that it should be. Sir Lucan has just died, literally of a broken heart, trying to help to move him. Then Sir Bedivere wept for the death of his brother. "Leave this weeping and mourning," said King Arthur, "for all this will not avail me; for wit thou well, and I might live myself, the death of Sir Lucan would grieve me evermore. But my time hieth fast," said King Arthur unto Sir Bedivere; "therefore take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it unto yonder water side, and, when thou comest there, I charge thee throw my sword into that water, and come again and tell me what thou shalt see there." "My lord," said Sir Bedivere, "your command shall be done, and lightly bring you word again." And so Sir Bedivere departed; and by the way he beheld that noble sword where the pummel and the haft were all of precious stones, and then he said to himself, "If I throw this rich sword into the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss." And then Sir Bedivere hid

Excalibur under a tree, and as soon as he might he came again unto King Arthur, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the sword into the water. "What sawest thou there?" said the King. "Sir," said he, "I saw nothing but waves and wind." "That is untruly said of thee," said King Arthur; "therefore go thou lightly and do my command, as thou art to me lief and dear; spare not, but throw it in." Then Sir Bedivere returned again, and took the sword in his hand; and then he thought it sin and shame to throw away that noble sword. And so eft he hid the sword, and returned again and told to the King that he had been at the water and done his command. "What saw ye there?" said the King. "Sir," said he, "I saw nothing but the water wap and waves wan." "Ah, traitor untrue!" said King Arthur, "now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would have weened that thou that hast been unto me so lief and dear, and thou art named a noble knight, and wouldst betray me for the rich sword? But now go again lightly, for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold; and but if thou dost not as I command thee, and if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with my own hands, for thou wouldst for my rich sword see me dead." Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water's side; and there he bound the girdle about the hilt, and then he threw the sword into the water as far as he might; and there came an arm and a hand above the water, and met it and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished.

And then the hand vanished away with the sword in the water. So Sir Bedivere came again to the King, and told him what he had seen. "Alas!" said the King, "help me from hence, for I dread me I have tarried over long." Then Sir Bedivere took King Arthur upon his back, and so went with him to the water's side. And when they were at the water's side, even fast by the bank hoved a little barge, with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen, and they all had black hoods, and they wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur.

"Now put me into the barge," said the King; and so he did softly; and there received him three queens with great mourning, and so these three queens sat them down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. And then that queen said, "Ah! dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas! this wound on your head has taken over much cold." And so then they rowed from the land, and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried, "Ah! my lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye go from me, and leave me here alone among mine enemies?" "Comfort thyself," said King Arthur, "and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in; for I will into the vale of Avilion for to heal me of my grievous wound; and if thou never hear more of me, pray for my soul." But evermore the queens and ladies wept and shrieked that it was

pity for to hear them. And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest; and so he went all the night.

The power of Arthurian romance is manifest in the use made of it so often for political purposes. Among Englishmen, we have seen, it served as a reason for glorifying themselves and patronising the French, while to the Welsh it was an inspiration in their prolonged struggle for independence. The Scotch in the fifteenth century likewise poured into it their bitterness against their foes across the border. King Lot and Sir Modred are then, curiously enough, exalted by certain of their chroniclers as champions of Scottish rights. The Arthur so much vaunted of their opponents was in reality, they declared, but a sorry bastard, whose life was stained with perjury and crime. The virulent Hector Boece sneers at Arthur's revels in York, and cites the opinion that he was the first to celebrate Christmas with disgraceful orgies. He pays no heed to Arthur's brilliant achievements abroad.

But the Matter of Britain is no longer a theme for discord, except perhaps among scholars holding different views of its perplexing growth. All nations now love to remember Arthur as the centre about whom revolved as noble a body of warriors as ever prince could boast. It is he, of whom we know so little that is true, who has become the chief figure of the greatest cycle of romance—romance embodying the highest ideals, and picturing the most polished manners, of the courtly society of the Middle Ages. Yet not only this. Mediæval, of course, are the conceptions that the lives of our ancient British knights reflect—but they are nevertheless powerful to-day. Though "the whole Round Table is dissolved," it remains now as ever "an image of the mighty world."

Therefore, it seems to us, as to Caxton, that in its varying forms the Book of Arthur is "right necessary often to be read. For in it ye shall find the gracious, knightly, and virtuous wars of the most noble knights of the world, whereby they got praising

continual. Also it seemeth by the oft reading thereof ye shall greatly desire to accustom yourself in following those gracious knightly deeds—that is to say, to dread God, and love righteousness, faithfully and courageously to serve your sovereign prince. And the more that God hath given you the triumphal honour, the meeker ye ought to be, ever fearing the unstableness of this deceivable world."

The Matter of England

Our national epic, if we have any, is based upon British rather than Anglo-Saxon tradition. King Arthur occupies in the political history of England a position somewhat parallel to Charlemagne's in that of France: Arthur was not English, and Charlemagne was not French. Our Germanic forefathers did not have the same large supply of legendary fiction concerning Arthur that was accessible to their descendants after the Conquest, and could never have dreamed that a fabulous hero of their despised Welsh neighbours would come to be exalted to so high a place as Arthur was destined to fill. Before the coming of the Normans the rulers of England sang by preference the exploits of ancient Teutonic heroes, or those of men of their own near kin or type who had gained fame at home. Nor did the increasing currency of foreign fable cause the disappearance of this native tradition, though in many cases it brought about its transformation. Throughout the Middle Ages the stories of Saxon warriors were repeated with delight, especially among those whose blood-ties were strongest with the Germanic past. Yet not, we must bear in mind, among those alone; for Saxon tales were seized upon by British minstrels, French poets, and Latin chroniclers, and, as fate would have it, sometimes preserved by them alone. In at least one instance (*Havelok*) native saga was embodied in French in the likeness of a Breton lay; in others (*e.g. Horn*, *Aelof*, *Waldef*, *Beves*) it was rewritten in the style of the *chansons de geste*; sometimes (*e.g.* in *Havelok*, *Guy of Warwick*) it was rhymed

in the usual octosyllabic couplets of romance; while several ancient sagas (*e.g.* the *Vita Herewardi Saxonis*) are extant only in Latin redactions or summaries.

Thus the traditions generally termed native are preserved in a great variety of forms, many of them far from primitive. These, moreover, are very far apart in age; and we must carefully distinguish the various versions from one another if we would estimate aright their real significance. In the hands of authors of different nationalities and epochs, the same substance received divergent impress, was moulded into shapes strangely unlike. It seemed almost necessary at first for a saga to assume the exterior semblance of French poetry in order to maintain its dignity; so that thus, as it were, subtly, by devious devices, Continental conceptions were disseminated in England and inevitably affected national tendency: reading about their own heroes, Englishmen learned foreign ways.

When the Saxons gained dominion in the land, they brought with them the tales they had been accustomed to hear at home, some at least of which were in literary form. Unfortunately, most of these have disappeared even in their early alliterative dress, and none at all are preserved in mediæval redactions. A mythical story of the Germanic hero Wade, father of great Wayland the Smith, and of his magic boat, is several times referred to by Chaucer and other Middle English writers, but we are now ignorant of its substance, despite the recent discovery of the scrap of an old poem on the subject. In truth, most of the primitive traditions of the Saxons seem to have been forgotten very early by cultivated people. Their place was taken by a new body of saga of native insular growth, which has for us, of course, far greater interest than any echoes of Teutonic myth. We may consider them as we will, as fact plus fable, or fable plus fact: the sum is the same. A few of these narratives are in the main perhaps accurate records of historical events, only embellished by legendary ornament; others are at bottom simply folk-tales localised and coloured in the land of their adoption. Let us for con-

venience accept Dr. Johnson's dictum that "all history so far as it is not supported by contemporary evidence is romance."

In an Anglo-Norman romance, *Waldef* (A.S. *Walþéof*), not yet published, the author explicitly states that the original of his poem was much loved by the English, high and low, by princes, dukes, and kings, up to the Norman Conquest, and that then it was translated into French, like the stories of Tristram and Aelof. The Anglo-Saxon original has now quite disappeared, but it was known to a fifteenth-century monk, John Bramis of Thetford, who used it, so he says, to finish his Latin prose translation of the French, which, though containing 22,000 lines, was then, as now, incomplete. He informs us, further, that the story of Waldef and his sons was first composed in verse, and translated from English by the French poet at the instance of a lady, the author's "friend," who did not understand that language. To judge from the summaries of the story, it was of the regular outstretched and extravagant combative sort we shall presently see examples of in *Beves of Hampton* and *Guy of Warwick*. We hear not only of the fortunes of Waldef, but of those of his father, King Bede, his sister Odenild, his nephew, Florenz, and his sons Guiac and Guthlac. Here too are faithless usurpers, exposed children, hostile "Saracens," and all sorts of intrigue and combat carried on through three generations.

We have no Anglo-Saxon version of the Tristram story, though, as we have seen, there is other evidence besides the statement in *Waldef* that such a work existed. Were it not, in fact, for the superadded Celtic tone, and the interweaving of Celtic incident, which it gained, much to its advantage, by being handled by British minstrels, we might fairly group it in the present chapter, where according to its origin it belongs. In the beginning it contained Germanic material very like the romance cycle with which we have next to deal, that of *Horn* and *Aelof*; but these were not so splendidly alchemised by art.

The oldest extant form of the story of Horn is contained in a *chanson de geste* by a twelfth-century Anglo-Norman writer named

Thomas, based probably on an earlier French version of a Saxon alliterative poem. There is no absolute evidence for this intermediate version, but all indications point to its existence. Its scope may be inferred from that of the oldest English redaction, *The Geste of King Horn*, composed *c.* 1250, which probably reproduces it in essential substance, if not in style. This, the oldest Middle English romance preserved, contains only some 1550 short lines, rhyming in couplets, while the *chanson de geste* comprises about 5250 alexandrines united by assonance. The former is a minstrel's song, written primarily, it seems, for public delivery before audiences of plain people, and therefore unaffected in tone and succinct in style. In comparison, the French poem is a very sophisticated product, courtly and feudal, elaborate and refined, evidently composed by a well-informed, cultivated, and pious man for the upper classes of Anglo-Norman society.

In brief, the story of Horn and Rimenhild is as follows:

The king of a land called Sudene is slain by hostile seamen, who thereupon take possession of his realm. His young son Horn they set adrift with several companions helpless on the sea. After a day and night their boat is cast ashore by the wind in the country of Westerness, in Britain, and the youths speedily make their way to the residence of the king near by. There they are treated with all kindness, and as time passes grow steadily in favour. Horn especially distinguishes himself by his unusual beauty, accomplishments, and prowess, and the princess Rimenhild engages him in love. Their intimacy is betrayed by a traitorous friend; the king will accept no explanations, and Horn is banished from the land. Before they separate, the lovers agree to be faithful to each other for seven years, and Rimenhild gives Horn a ring as a keepsake, to inspire him in fight. Leaving Britain, he journeys by boat to Ireland, where also he wins renown and is offered the Irish king's daughter to wife. He refuses, without offence, and remains there in all honour until he hears that his lady is to be married against her will to the King of Fenice (Reynes). Collecting a body of Irish followers, he returns in haste to Britain (Westerness), gains access to the wedding-feast in disguise, and reveals himself to the unhappy bride by dropping her ring in the beaker of wine that she offers him to drink. Finding her still true, he assembles his men, slays his opponents, and rescues Rimenhild from her plight. Without delaying, however, to arrange a marriage with her, he sets out to recover his native land. This he accomplishes without difficulty, and is reunited with

his mother, who since his departure has lived in a cave by the seashore, to avoid being put to death by the heathen usurpers. While the hero is restoring the land to order and establishing peace, Rimenhild is beset by another lover, this time Horn's old comrade, Fikel (Fikenhild), who has carried her off to his castle by the sea. Warned by a dream, the hero returns, gains admittance to the castle with some of his followers, disguised as minstrels, and soon disposes of the traitor and his men. He gives to one of his friends the land of Rimenhild's father; to another, that of the first rival suitor; and a third he weds to the princess of Ireland, before he himself returns with Rimenhild to his own country "among all his kin."

The topography of this tale, a matter of long dispute, has recently been determined pretty exactly. Horn's home Sudene is a French writing of the Old Norse name for the Isle of Man; Westerness is a peninsula in the "west country," probably the Wirral; and Fenice is Furness. The rudderless boat carried the hero, it would seem, into the Mersey, and Chester was the capital of the English king's domains. It was there that the marriage of Rimenhild was being celebrated when the hero returned from Ireland and interrupted it just in time. Ireland is designated in the French poem by the Scandinavian name "Westir," West Isles.

Inasmuch as the names of persons as well as of places are Norse, or such as were familiar to Norsemen; inasmuch, moreover, as the story shows striking likeness to Old Norse historical sagas of the adventures of vikings in the West, the hypothesis is justified that it arose among the Norsemen in the British Isles, and was transmitted by them (orally, no doubt) to the Saxons, by whom it was communicated in literary form to the Normans in England.

That there is somewhat of actual fact at the basis of the saga is highly probable, though in its present form it shows much poetic elaboration. At all events, it reflects the life in Great Britain during an impressive period, when Northerners held control of Western waters, when the lands along the coast were never secure against viking depredations, when kings ruled in petty principalities only so long as they were able to resist encroachment or invasion, and when control passed suddenly from men of one nation to those of another. During this period the Isle of Man was a

centre of viking influence, a meeting-place for opposing forces, an ever-coveted vantage-ground for invading fleets. The events of the story appear most natural if located there. They are such as might have been experienced by the Norwegians who were preponderant in its control, such as they would have been likely to record.

It was not uncommon in early viking times, as all are aware, for noble youths to be brought up among strangers until they came to maturity, and then to be helped to recover lands of which they had been forcibly deprived. Even without the spur of necessity occasionally applied, ambitious warriors travelled widely in the path of adventure. They went from one court to another to obtain knowledge of the world and experience of men. Assistance in war was desired by chieftains everywhere, and strong fighters were gladly received by any king. Personal bravery was above all lauded in this age of independent achievement, and valorous deeds won substantial reward, even to the hand of a princess and the control of a kingdom. Were visitors to foreign courts also accomplished in music, poetry, or manly sports, they were thrice welcome; for festivities were as frequent as combats, and some "abridgment" was necessary to "beguile the lazy time." In pastimes of various sorts men and women associated, and deep attachments were then naturally formed. We have many instances of international marriages between historical personages which were productive of important political results, many cases where the love of great leaders overmastered their prudence and led to the rash imperilling of their own and their followers' lives. The story of Horn and Rimenhild is the natural product of such conditions. It records what were possibly actual events of the tenth century, but in the guise of romance, and with certain accretions of fancy which became attached to it in the course of a long period of varied transmission.

The early romance was revised by Thomas with the intention of making it part of an epic cycle. The first section of the trilogy he planned was to deal with the history of Horn's father

Aelof, the second with Horn himself, and the third with his son Hadermod. That the part concerning Aelof was written is certain, but probably not that about Hadermod. *Aelof* was a long story of the same "exile and return" type as *Horn*, but apparently of West Germanic origin.

The hero, we learn from the summary in *Horn*, was a foundling, kindly reared by a king named Silaf (Silaus). When he grew up, he was discovered to be of royal lineage, the son of Goldeburc, daughter of Baderolf, Emperor of Germany, and Silaf gave him the princess Samburc to wife. Previously he had distinguished himself by his prowess, overcoming many heathen warriors, but had been the victim of calumny on the part of a traitor Denerey. We infer that these unjust accusations concerned his relations with the princess, and no doubt resembled those directed against Horn by Fikel, and that, being in some way vindicated, he was decreed the king's heir. After Silaf's death he assumed power and for ten years defended his realm against the heathen, until finally he was overcome by an invading host and put to death. His son, however, lived to achieve revenge for this disaster.

On the basis of Thomas's poem was written at the close of the next century another English version of the theme, called *Horn Child*, which is much less important. In it the story is miserably distorted by the introduction of new matter. There is now no mention of Sudene or the coming of the hero to Britain in a castaway boat. Instead, Horn's father is made King of Northumberland, and his struggles to defend his realm against his foes from Denmark and Ireland are related in detail. The hostile seamen are represented not as Norsemen, but as Danes, and their depredations are definitely localised in Yorkshire. In thus altering the induction, the author made use of older traditions of conflicts between the Northumbrians and the allied Scotch and Irish, which were possibly in poetic form. *Horn Child* is, in truth, a reckless combination of diverse material, the product of a period when in romance art was yielding to artifice and originality to convention. The conventionality of the poem in both phraseology and incident, its inconsistencies and vagaries, its tiresome "rhyme doggerel," and many meaningless lines, are so conspicuous that Chaucer's ridicule, we can but admit, was

richly deserved. He mentions *Horn Child* as one of the "romances of pris" that *Sir Thopas* so far surpassed in worth.

One of the most striking scenes of *Horn Child*, that at the banquet, was perpetuated in several Scottish ballads called *Hind Horn*, still current it may be in remote parts. Finally, in the fifteenth century, another English version appeared, likewise based on the French. This was a translation of the very popular prose romance of *Ponthus et Sidoine*, written before 1445 in French by Ponthus de la Tour Landri, with the purpose of exalting his distinguished family. Here Thomas's poem is completely remodelled into a book of courtesy, fitted for the instruction of noble youth. The work has particular interest as the portrayal of an ideal knight of later chivalrous times.

If we review the history of this interesting story, we shall find it an instructive example of the way legend grows, and be put on our guard against the use of late redactions of material as indicative of its early quality. We have seen that there still exist three French redactions of the story of Horn written during the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, dependent each on its predecessor, from which were derived three corresponding English versions independent of one another. In each language the three redactions differ greatly in form as well as in spirit—the first in simple verse, the second in more complicated metre, the third in prose. Each version is freer than the last in the treatment of the material. New elements are added at every stage; new incidents are regularly substituted for old; new names appear as the centuries pass. The motive of the composition ever changes. Starting as a simple record of heroic tradition, assuming soon the sophistication of romance, the story becomes finally a means of glorifying a single family, "whereof a man may lerne many goode ensamples, and yonge men may here the good dedes of aunciente people that dide much goode and worschip in their days." The hero in the first English version was a Norseman, in the second an Englishman, in the third a Frenchman. Steadily the influence of Continental conceptions

increases. Steadily the traces of Northern origin disappear. Journeys by land replace those by sea. The action shifts more and more from the outlying islands to the mainland of Europe and the East. Viking warriors become crusading knights. Each redaction reflects the manners and sentiments of the age when it was fashioned. The last version is a far cry from the first.

It would be hard to prove that any part of the story of Horn is historical, though it was definitely localised, and corresponds with actual happenings, in early England. In that of Havelok the Dane, the foundation of the narrative in real circumstance is perhaps equally questionable, or at all events quite as hard to define; but in this case the hero is identified with a well-known Norse king, Olaf Cuaran, a conspicuous figure in the history of England in the tenth century. His father Sigtrygg (Sihtric) ruled for a while in Northumbria, and married as his second wife the sister of King Athelstan. After his death in 927 Athelstan assumed control in Northumbria, and drove out Olaf. The young prince, however, having married a daughter of Constantine III., King of Scotland, at the head of a large body of Scots, Danes, and Britons attacked Athelstan; but he was completely routed at the Battle of Brunanburh—a defeat, it will be remembered, which is recorded with exultation in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. After the death of Athelstan in 940, Olaf was recalled to Northumbria, but ruled there only four years before being driven out by Eadmund. In 949 he regained control, but was finally expelled in 952. Then he established himself in Ireland, where he reigned as King of Dublin until 980. The year after he died on a pilgrimage to Iona.

Now heroic tales of world-wide dissemination have a persistent way of getting attached to particular heroes; and Olaf's career was suitable for fictitious embellishment. He was perhaps confused in the popular mind with other Olafs; and various traditions were amalgamated to heighten the interest of his life as rehearsed by poets and chroniclers, each of whom had his own end to serve. Their accounts of the legendary Olaf (Havelok the Dane) are

various. All, however, deserve notice here, as having been written in England by Englishmen, though only one of importance is in the English tongue.

In the twelfth century, when the treasure-trove of the Saxons was so extensively appropriated by the Anglo-Normans, were composed, it appears, at least two French poems on Havelok—one, the more primitive, apparently a metrical romance, the other in the likeness of a Breton lay. Only the latter is preserved; but of the romance we have a summary interpolated in the manuscript of Robert of Brunne's chronicle, to replace certain lines in which the historian gives his reluctant reasons for omitting the romantic account of the hero.

Gounter, King of Denmark, is overcome by foes from England and is slain in combat. His wife Eleyne manages to escape the general slaughter with her young son Havelok "Caraunt," and induces Grim, "a well good mariner," to take her from the land. While at sea, they are overtaken by "outlaws" and the queen is slain; but Grim lands safely at Grimsby (so called after him), and there rears Havelok as his own son. When the youth becomes a man he takes leave of his foster-parents and makes his way to the court of Edelsie, King of Lyndsey (the northern part of Lincolnshire), whose sister Orewayn was married to Egelbright, Danish King of Norfolk. At their death, Edelsie usurps the land and marries Egelbright's daughter and heir, Argill, to Havelok, who is then serving him as "quistron" (scullion). Havelok is handsome and well-beloved, but Argill, thinking him too inferior in station to be her husband, feels deeply her disgrace. Desiring knowledge of his kin, she urges him to visit Grimsby, where fortunately they learn of Havelok's real parentage. Thereupon the hero sails to Denmark, is well received by Sykar, his father's sometime steward, and through his aid regains his native land. He then returns to England to recover his wife's heritage, is successful, and becomes the ruler of both Norfolk and Lyndsey.

In the romance, the invader, it was said, went to Denmark to demand the tribute "that Arthur whilom nam." In the short poem, the invader is represented as Arthur himself. He leaves the kingdom in control of Hodulf (Eadulf), whose treason had helped him to gain it. The latter keeps Havelok, a youth of seven, in his castle. It is remarked that ever while he sleeps an odorous flame issues from his mouth. Hodulf having designs on his life, he and his mother are carried off by Grim. The story develops as before. Havelok's marriage with Argentille (Argill) is explained as due to the desire of the traitor Alsi (Edelsie) to humble her, and yet fulfil his

compact with her father, who has left her in his charge on the agreement that she shall be married to the strongest man to be found. Argentille one night, bemoaning her lot, observes the mysterious flame, and also has dreams, which awaken her wonder. She is urged by a hermit to whom she confides her experiences, to inquire concerning Havelok's parentage. They discover the truth at Grimsby, and sail to Denmark, where the hero displays amazing prowess and is crowned king. Returning to England after four years, he defeats Alsi at Thetford (using, by the way, in the battle the device of magnifying the appearance of his army by tying the dead to stakes), and reigns over Lincoln and Lyndsey for twenty years.

We are most interested, however, in an English version of the story, unjustifiably called a "lay," which in its present form dates from about 1300. Its relation to the other accounts so far discussed is still obscure. The names of the characters, except Havelok and Grim, are all different. Evidently the English poem stands by itself; but it is not safe to assume that it, rather than the French poems, represents best the original narrative either in substance or in style. Like *Horn Child*, it is probably a late redaction of early French material, into which new names, new incidents, and new sentiments are introduced. But it is a far better poem than *Horn Child*: it holds the reader's attention throughout its 3000 lines by its fresh, unsophisticated vigour, and by the interest of its evidently accurate descriptions of humble life at the time of its composition. In the structure of the poem are apparent certain departures from the primitive form (notably the transformation of the induction) which involve unhappy duplication of incident, and inconsistencies, but other signs of independent treatment, due surely to the poet himself, attest him as a writer of originality and considerable narrative power.

The English tale of *Havelok* was not written for the refined. No such "gentleness" as pervades the extant French lay appears anywhere except as an echo. Grim is not as there a "baron" in the service of the Danish kings, but a rude fisherman. His spouse is a homely fishwife. His sons are uncouth and rough. The life they lead, in which Havelok willingly participates, is

that of the plain fisher folk of Grimsby in the writer's time, who sold their catch and farm produce in "the good borough" of Lincoln, and returned laden with articles in exchange. The minstrel begins familiarly by asking the "goodmen, wives, and maidens," who have assembled to listen to his recitation, for "a cup of full good ale," and we may well believe that in the public room of an alehouse, or in the kitchen of a manor, his poem met with chief favour. The minstrel's style was adapted to his humble audience. He endeavours by open appeals to hold their attention, indulges them with many proverbs, regales them with detailed descriptions of scenes they could enjoy, passes hurriedly over such as, being prolonged, "would annoy this fair geng (gathering)," and advances for their applause sentiment to their liking. "It is no shame for to swink (work)," he says, for example, and his auditors agreed in thought, most likely too in word. In truth, the picture of a king's son performing menial duties without complaint, hauling a fisherman's heavy nets, going in rags barefoot to familiar Lincoln, serving there as a cook's knave, and then by a swift turn of fortune's wheel wedded to the noblest lady of the land and exalted to the throne, was surely calculated to stir the imagination of the lowly, who would listen to it with glee. The English lower classes have always admired a strong prince of commanding appearance, good at manly games, superior in bearing and accomplishments to themselves. More than now they formerly believed that men are born to the purple, that rulers are divinely distinguished by some mark of God's favour, and that hereditary rank demands subservience of inferiors as a right. Acknowledging this, however, they felt with the author of the romance that *noblesse oblige*. The king who is faithfully served, he makes clear, is himself worthy of love and reverence, kindly disposed to his subjects, firm to denounce vice in men of whatever station, swift to reward iniquity wherever discovered, generous to the poor—in a word, a man in his own person without fear or reproach. In commending the virtues of the good King Athelwold, the author plainly utters contem-

porary opinions regarding social conditions in his own period, such as the insecurity of private property, the maladministration of justice, and the abused privileges of the clergy, all of which evils Edward I. strove to overcome.

One passage only we have space to quote, a picture of an old-time coronation in merry England, which forms an interesting contrast to that of Edward VII.

> When he was king, there might men see
> The most joy that might be:
> Butting with the sharp spears,
> Skirming with talevas[1] that men bear,
> Wrestling with lads, putting of stone,
> Harping and piping, full good won,[2]
> Leyk of mimes of hasard ok,[3]
> Romance-reading on the book;
> There might men hear the gests sing,
> The gleemen on the tabor ding;
> There might men see the bulls bait,
> And the boars with hounds teight.[4]

And so on. Every sort of "glee" might be seen; clothing and food were freely distributed; there were great banquets; wine flowed "so it were water of the sea." The feast lasted forty days.

Havelok has many comrades in romance—heroes of the "exile and return" type. The historical foundation of his story is exceedingly slight; but nevertheless it was taken seriously by chroniclers and others and served a political purpose. As early as about 1150 Gaimar introduces him into his *History of the English* as a notable figure. Confusing, or deliberately identifying, King Constantine III. of Scotland, actually the father-in-law of Olaf Cuaran, with the legendary Constantine, represented by Geoffrey as Arthur's nephew and successor, he pictured Havelok as reigning in the sixth century, a Danish

[1] Skirmishing with large shields.
[2] In great quantity.
[3] Also games of chance with dice.
[4] Lively (?).

ruler of England before the Saxon Conquest. Who was first responsible for this notion we cannot say; but once started, we may be sure it was fostered by the Anglo-Danes, who were naturally eager to establish a claim to legitimate control of the land. It seems likely, therefore, that the story of Havelok was developed in the time of Cnut, when it would not have seemed unreasonable for a Danish king to have held peaceful sway over Northumbria. Several references to the hero in unscientific chronicles of later England, even to the time of Caxton, show that the belief thus engendered had a long life.

The romances of *Guy of Warwick* and *Beves of Hampton*, of similar character, were two of the most popular in mediæval England. Written in French as early perhaps as the twelfth century, redacted in English about 1300, and frequently later, they remained current in varying form for five hundred years and more. Chaucer mentions the two in *Sir Thopas*, and from a version of *Guy* borrowed more of the phraseology of his parody than from any other "romance of prys." Puttenham in 1589 attests that *Guy* and *Beves* were popular then at "places of assembly where the company shall be desirous to hear of old adventures and valiances of noble knights in time past"; but these were not the castles of the land. He mentions the two among other works as "made purposely for recreation of the common people at Christmas dinners and bridals, and in taverns and alehouses and such places of base resort." Earlier, high and low joined more frequently at common gatherings, and the romances of *Guy* and *Beves* pleased all alike when read aloud. They were then, of course, very different in tone and form from the degenerate versions to which Puttenham refers—like splendid robes, cast off by their original owners, which, when torn or faded, become the treasures of the poor.

Guy of Warwick was celebrated as a national hero, one who by extraordinary strength and valour had saved Saxon England from foreign dominion; and the chief basis of this renown lay in the report of his successful combat with a giant Colbrand, who

fought as champion of the Danes. By Guy's single efforts the integrity of the kingdom was preserved. The account usually given of this, the central incident of his career, is as follows:

King Athelstan is besieged in his capital, Winchester, by the Danes, under their leader Anlaf. He must yield unless he can find some one to meet the defiant Colbrand's challenge. Athelstan prays for guidance, and is bidden by an angel to go early to the gates and secure an old palmer, whom he shall find there, to undertake the fight. This is Guy, who has returned home after a long pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The King induces him to meet the Danish champion. He and Anlaf (Havelok) agree that their rival claims shall be settled by the duel. The long struggle is described in detail. In the end, however, Colbrand is slain and the Danes withdraw. Athelstan's joy and gratitude know no bounds; but no offer of reward will induce Guy to remain. He makes his way secretly to his own castle at Warwick, and in disguise, along with other palmers, receives from his wife Felice the dole of food that she was wont piously to dispense. He establishes himself at an empty hermitage near by and is sent daily sustenance by the countess. When at last his approaching death is revealed to him, he summons his wife, discovers himself to her, and passes away in her arms. Very shortly after, she too dies, and is buried beside him.

This, the nucleus of the Guy legend, was at first perhaps independently treated (cf. the late *Guy and Colbrand* in the Percy MS.). It had possibly some historical foundation, but nevertheless appears now as legend. The combat of the two champions representing the Saxons and Danes resembles that of Tristram of Cornwall and Morhout of Ireland, Arthur of Britain and Flollo of France. The situation is interesting, and these the closing events of Guy's life might have been rendered highly impressive in the hands of a skilful poet. As a matter of fact, however, *Guy of Warwick* taken as a whole is wearisome: it is but a series of commonplace adventures stretched out to an unreasonable length. The general setting alone need occupy us here:

Guy is the son of Sigard of Wallingford, steward of the Earl of Warwick. He falls in love with the earl's daughter, a haughty, "difficult" lady named Felice. She will only accept him on condition that he wins fame. Thus stimulated, he crosses the sea and distinguishes himself in many ways abroad.

Not, however, until he is reputed the most valiant knight in Christendom does Felice become his wife. For a month after his marriage he enjoys great happiness, but then he begins to reflect that his life has been ill-spent: he has fought for love of Felice and not for God. Straightway he dons the garb of a pilgrim and sets out to expiate his sins. His experiences are many and varied. In the East he overcomes giants and brings succour to the distressed. Finally, after many years of wandering, he returns to England just in time to save his country from the Danes in the fight already described.

Guy, moreover, was provided with a son Reinbrun, for whom also was fashioned a suitable career. Guy, of course, is away from home when the boy is born. He is therefore given into the charge of a faithful friend, Heraud of Arden. But when only seven years old he is stolen away by merchants and carried to foreign lands. Heraud searches for him diligently, like Gouvernayl for Tristram. At last he and Reinbrun meet and fight together a hard fight, which ends by their embracing each other when Reinbrun reveals his name. Other reminiscent episodes, in great number, it would be distracting to enumerate. Our judgment on such tales as these does not coincide with that of our forefathers, who saw in the prolongation of the fanciful careers of heroes only a matter of congratulation.

We observe in these early English romances an epic tendency to grow into cycles. When a hero became popular, information was demanded regarding his ancestors and his descendants, and thus were linked together previously independent narratives, or new ones were concocted to prepare for and continue his famous career. *Guy of Warwick* apparently owed its amazing popularity to the qualities that it shares with the *chansons de geste*: it was at once belligerent, patriotic, and religious. That it was an inartistic conglomeration did not trouble much the mediæval Philistines, who got from it "both pleasure and profit."

The old English sagas suffered sadly by being made over in the style of the late *chansons de geste*. They lost their primitive realistic force and simplicity, and became extravagant, complicated, long-drawn-out, and dull. Even at their best they are not to be compared for charm with the tales of Britain. The heroes

were too pugilistic; they had too little time for polite amenities. They were superstitious, fanatical, and fierce. Women they disregarded except as their inferior helpmates. We miss the atmosphere of courtesy and refinement that characterises the British tales, where gentle ladies enter to "rain influence and adjudge the prize."

Beves of Hampton, though rather less popular than *Guy* at home, had far more vogue abroad. There are three metrical French versions of the story and one in prose. From France it passed into Italy, where six different versions remain. Redactions are also extant in Scandinavian, Dutch, Irish, Slavic, and modern Yiddish. The forms most interesting to us are the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *chanson de geste* (containing 3850 lines), and the Middle English romance written about 1300, on the basis perhaps of an earlier translation from the French. This latter, as preserved, combines two metres, the introduction being in tail-rhyme strophe, while the main part of the poem (over 4000 lines) is in short couplets. This probably indicates the existence of two redactions; but in *Guy* the same situation confronts us, and the facts are not evident.

Fundamentally, *Beves* was a viking tale of the tenth century, very like *Horn*; but in this case no early form of the story persisted, and it appears now completely transformed in the style of the Crusading epic that *Horn* only by good luck escaped. We have no room to trace Beves' robustious career and relate how he was done out of his rights for many a long day, but at last came to his own; how during the period of his probation he fought usurpers, traitors, culprits, rivals, dragons—any and every sort of opponent—always with the same self-confidence, fanaticism, and success. Many are the picturesque features of the narrative, but they are drowned in a flood of commonplace. The story had lost its simplicity: its topography was turned topsy-turvy, and its temper transformed by witless redactions before it reached its present shape. Yet the hero was popular for the same good reasons as Guy—his combative zeal, piety,

and patriotism. Men were interested also in the achievements of Beves' sword Morglay (kept as a relic in Arundel Castle, like Guy's armour at Warwick), in his steed Arundel, almost human in understanding and fidelity, and in the character of his beloved Josiane, more like the forthputting Rimenhild than the difficult Felice. A detailed but entertaining summary of this, as well as of *Guy* and other English romances, may be found in the *Specimens* of George Ellis, who, to quote from the encomium of his friend Sir Walter Scott,

> the dullest theme bid flit
> On wings of unexpected wit.

Guy of Warwick, we have seen, is represented as having fought with Athelstan at a crisis in the history of the land. The opponent of Athelstan at Brunanburh was Anlaf Cuaran, whose name at least the hero Havelok bore. We have other evidence that this powerful king was long remembered by the people. About his name much legend clings; and a short strophic romance, written about 1350, was attached to his name.

It tells of the relations between the king and his three "wedded brethren," who had thus been united in friendship before he ascended the throne. One of them, jealous of the king's favour, too liberally, as he thinks, vouchsafed to his comrade, accuses the latter and his wife wrongfully, and induces the king to act despitefully towards them. Even the archbishop, who interposes at the request of the queen, is dismissed, and the queen herself is roughly treated. An excommunication, however, brings the king to his senses. He recalls the primate, who submits the accused to an ordeal of fire. They walk nine fiery plowshares without injury; but the accuser, who is forced to undergo the same trial, fails miserably. The traitor is then tortured and hanged, as, in the opinion of the mediæval writer, he richly deserved.

Some circumstances in this story make one think that it would have been better connected with King John than with Athelstan. At all events, it took its present shape in a time of favouritism and underhand intrigue, when Church and State were not seldom in conflict, and when the ordeal and the trial by combat were regular methods of determining guilt. By the

latter method, Gunhild, daughter of King Cnut, was said to have been vindicated from an unjust accusation of adultery, and her story was sung of in the streets in the twelfth century, as William of Malmesbury attests.

Of Athelstan and Anlaf Cuaran William also records a pleasant tale of how the latter visited the English camp on the eve of the Battle of Brunanburh in the disguise of a minstrel, and, though recognised by a former follower, escaped unbetrayed. Similarly, King Alfred was fabled to have gained access to the camp of his enemies in disguise. The great Alfred, in truth, had attached to him much legend that the people lovingly perpetuated. If in the Middle Ages he was "England's darling," it was in good measure because of the tributes of unauthentic tradition. But here we may recall certain actual vicissitudes of his early career—the circumstances of his life in the inaccessible retreat of Athelney. As Asser informs us:

> Alfred, King of the West Saxons, with a few of his nobles, and certain soldiers and vassals, used to lead an unquiet life among the woodlands of the county of Somerset in great tribulation; for he had none of the necessaries of life except what he could forage openly or stealthily, by frequent sallies, from the pagans or even from the Christians who had submitted to the rule of the pagans.

Alfred, then, was for a time a fugitive, a royal outlaw, the most dignified of a goodly number of popular heroes in England who openly resisted foreign aggression or official injustice. In no other country, except Iceland, where the sagas of Grettir and Gisli were read with glee, were tales of outlaws so popular as in England.

Hereward the Wake, who, with his valiant band of Saxons, kept the Conqueror so long at bay in the marshes of Ely, no doubt had his exploits recorded in the vernacular, though we know them only in a Latin redaction. In Anglo-Norman verse of the thirteenth century are told the adventures of the famous pirate Eustace the Monk, who flourished in King John's time; and although, to judge from the statements of contemporary

chroniclers, he was in fact desperately wicked, a constant terror to the English, the romance of his life is highly entertaining, and we applaud his deceptions of witless foes. It is to be noted that, though a freebooter, he came of a distinguished family. This is true likewise of another outlaw, Fulk FitzWarren, whose deeds were also celebrated in an Anglo-Norman poem, preserved, unfortunately, in a prose paraphrase only. Fulk belonged to a noble family living on the Welsh border. His father was a favourite of Henry II., and he himself was a friend of Richard I. He caused John infinite worry, but finally, in 1203, was pardoned by him and restored to his rights.

These outlaws were real personages, recognised by contemporary historians, though many of the tales about them are purely romantic and fabulous. It is different with Robin Hood, who, in Professor Child's judgment, is "absolutely a creation of the ballad muse."

"Robin Hood," says that great scholar, whose authority in the matter of ballad history is supreme—"Robin Hood is a yeoman, outlawed for reasons not given but easily surmised, 'courteous and free,' religious in sentiment, and above all reverent of the Virgin, for the love of whom he is respectful to all women. He lives by the king's deer (though he loves no man in the world so much as his king) and by levies on the superfluity of the higher orders, secular and spiritual, bishops and archbishops, abbots, bold barons, and knights, but harms no husbandman or yeoman, and is friendly to poor men generally, imparting to them what he takes from the rich. Courtesy, good-temper, liberality, and manliness are his chief marks; for courtesy and good-temper he is a popular Gawain. Yeoman as he is, he has a kind of royal dignity, a princely grace, and a gentlemanlike refinement of humour. This is the Robin Hood of the Gest especially; the late ballads debase this primary conception in various ways and degrees."

The Gest of Robin Hood dates in its present form from the early sixteenth century, but may have been put together as early as 1400, or before, on the basis of still earlier ballads. It is "a popular epic," divided into eight "fyttes." It tells above all of Robin's relations with Sir Richard at the Lee, how he rescued him from a sad predicament by lending him

money with which to pay his debts, how the knight proved himself a faithful friend and ran risks for his sake, but lost nothing in the end because of the bravery and adroitness of the outlaw and his trusty followers, notably Little John. This delightful ballad-epic is too familiar to need retelling. It leaves us in love with Robin and his men, happy in their power to outwit the poor sheriff of Nottingham and deprive the fat ecclesiastics of their garnered grain; it makes us believe in honesty, liberality, courtesy, manly accomplishments, and the outdoor life.

In summer, when the shawes be sheen,
And leaves be large and long,
It is full merry in fair forest
To hear the foulës song:

To see the deer draw to the dale,
And leave the hillës hee (high),
And shadow 'em in the leavës green,
Under the green-wood tree.

This we feel profoundly. And England is the merrier, the English are truer and freer, because of the mediæval ballads of Robin Hood.

The words just quoted are from the fine old ballad of *Robin Hood and the Monk*, which tells how the monk and the sheriff of Nottingham, who have captured Robin, are deceived by the cunning of Little John and Much the Miller's son, and lose their prisoner. The king also is befooled by the same bold pair. *Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne* attests not only Robin's skill in archery, but his strength in fight and his splendid audacity: he slays the unhappy Guy in single combat, dresses up in the latter's clothes, advances boldly into the presence of the sheriff, and releases Little John from serious peril. *Robin Hood and the Potter* gives a pleasant account of how the former exchanges clothes with a potter, who has proved himself worthy of his fellowship by beating him in fight, and, thus disguised, gets himself entertained by the sheriff and outwits him merrily. Here

Robin acts somewhat like his historical prototypes Hereward, Fulk FitzWarren, and Eustace the Monk.

The ballads which deal with such heroes are indicative of popular sentiment. The famous English outlaws were regarded sympathetically when they resisted official interference in what they considered their rights. The game laws being administered with great severity, those who represented the rulers were the object of general dislike, and were deceived gladly whenever it was possible. We have a delightful ballad of three brave archers of Inglewood Forest, outlawed for breach of these laws, *Adam Bell, Clim of the Clough and William of Cloudesly*, who engage our full sympathy.

William is a married man, who, in spite of the remonstrances of his sworn-brothers, goes one day to see his wife and children at Carlisle. The ballad tells how he is discovered and captured, and how he is freed by his comrades after a fine display of stratagem, boldness, and skill in handling the long-bow —how thereupon they seek grace from the king, and win it through the interposition of the queen—how, finally, to allay the king's wrath, which increases when the news comes of the terrible slaughter of his men that the outlaws have caused at Carlisle, Cloudesly displays his amazing power as an archer: like William Tell, he shoots an apple from his son's head. The king appoints Cloudesly chief-rider over the north country; his wife and sons are taken into the queen's service; and his yeoman friends dwell happily at court.

The placability of the king is exhibited also in the highly interesting tale of Gamelyn, which is familiar in a poem of some 900 long lines, written about 1350. It was preserved by scribes among Chaucer's works, and is thought to have been a poem that he had in mind to redact. If so, it would doubtless have been put into the mouth of the forester-yeoman, who knew all the "usage" of woodcraft.

> He was clad in cote and hood of grene;
> A sheef of pecok-arwes brighte and kene
> Under his belt he bar ful thriftily; . . .
> And in his hand he bar a mighty bowe.

It would surely have been suitable for this picturesque yeoman

to tell of a "crowned king of outlaws," as Gamelyn is pictured in the tale.

He is the youngest of three brothers, a youth of extraordinary physical strength, who wins a reputation for boldness and courage. His eldest brother seizes his possessions and tries to get rid of him, but is outwitted and in the end hanged for his sins. The hero is a reckless outlaw, who defies sheriff and justice of the peace with a light heart. He has been driven to this life, however, simply by necessity: "He must needs walk in wood that may not walk in town." He is in the wood, he asserts,

> no harm for to do,
> But if we meet with a deer to shoot thereto,
> As men that be hungry, and may no meat find,
> And be hard bested under wood-lind.

So, when the king wishes, he is very glad to make friends with him, and accepts from his monarch a position as "Chief Justice of all his free forest," provided only that all his "wight young men" are likewise forgiven and well treated.

This is essentially a manly tale. Women are rigidly excluded. To be sure, just at the close, Gamelyn is said to have wedded a wife "both good and fair"; but that was not a matter to be talked about. Strangely enough, in the future development of the story love and marriage assume the chief place. Gamelyn gives way to Orlando, and Rosalind is introduced to ennoble as well as to complicate the tale. In some way or other, a version of it got into the hands of Thomas Lodge, who used it as a basis for the first part of his novel entitled *Euphues' Golden Legacy*. On this novel Shakspere founded his play of *As You Like It*.

Times had changed when Shakspere wrote. The forest of Arden was not then the abode of outlaws as of old. Now the past is even more remote, but still we feel with Keats:

> Gone, the merry morris din,
> Gone, the song of Gamelyn;
> Gone, the tough-belted outlaw
> Idling in the "grene shawe." . . .

So it is; yet let us sing
Honour to the old bow-string!
Honour to the bugle-horn!
Honour to the woods unshorn!
Honour to the Lincoln green!
Honour to the archer keen!

"Next to adventures of Robin Hood and his men, the most favourite topic in English popular poetry is the chance encounter of a king, unrecognised as such, with one of his humbler subjects. . . . The most familiar of these tales are *The King and the Tanner*, and *The King and the Miller*; the former reaching back beyond the sixteenth century, the latter perhaps not beyond the seventeenth, but modelled upon tales of respectable antiquity, of which there is a specimen from the early years of the thirteenth century." Summaries of several such tales will be found in the fifth volume of Professor Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, from which the words above are quoted. The early thirteenth-century story referred to is that of "pril-wril" told by Giraldus Cambrensis about Henry II. Another very entertaining one is embodied in *John the Reeve*, a poem of 910 lines, preserved only in the Percy Folio MS., but dating from the fifteenth century. It relates an adventure of Edward Longshanks, when once he was forced to spend a night at his reeve's. Occleve states that Edward III. purposely went about in disguise:

O worthy king benign, Edward the last,
Thou had'st often in thy heart a dread impressed
Which that thy humble ghost full sore aghast,
And to know if thou cursed wert or blessed,
Among the people oft hast thou thee dressed
Into the country, in simple array alone,
To hear what men said of thy person.

John the Reeve is mentioned by both Gavin Douglas and Dunbar in conjunction with Ralph Collier, whose acquaintance we have already made as the chance associate of Charlemagne. In late broadsides and tracts, similar tales are told of other kings:

Alfred, James I., William III., and Henry VIII. Bishop Percy justly praised *John the Reeve* for "genuine humour, diverting incidents, and faithful pictures of rustic manners"; but he could have found nothing good to say of these poor imitations. We recall the dialogue in *Love's Labour's Lost*:

Armado. Is there not a ballad, boy, of the King and the Beggar?

Moth. The world was very guilty of such a ballad some three ages since: but I think now 'tis not to be found; or, if it were, it would neither serve for the writing nor the tune.

The Matter of Greece and Rome

The Story of Troy

In the *House of Fame*, Chaucer enumerates the chief writers honoured in his time for their treatment of classical themes, "folk of digne reverence," whom, in his dream, he saw standing on high pillars of distinction. Beside Statius, who bore up upon his shoulders the fame of Thebes and the cruel Achilles, stood

> Ful wonder hye on a pileer
> Of yren, he, the gret Omeer;
> And with him Dares and Tytus
> Before, and eek he, Lollius,
> And Guido eek de Columpnis,
> And English Gaufride eek, y-wis;
> And ech of these, so have I Joye,
> Was besy for to bere up Troye.
> So hevy ther-of was the fame,
> That for to bere it was no game.

Who are these five men associated with Homer, and what have they to do with the matter of antiquity? Much indeed, if we consider the state of mediæval knowledge. From them, not from Homer, our ancestors derived their information of the famous war of antiquity. Chaucer calls Homer "the great," and no doubt knew that the fame of the Trojans depended finally on his splendid poem. But with the *Iliad* he and his

contemporaries certainly had no first-hand acquaintance. It was not, of course, their fault. Greek was a language which few then understood, and the ancient "tale of Troy divine" was not accessible to them as it is to us. Had they known Homer, they would at once have acknowledged his literary superiority to all his successors who treated the same theme, unless perhaps for patriotic reasons they had withheld their praise of his work. In the following words Chaucer reveals the first secret of the neglect of Homer:

> But yit I gan ful wel espye,
> Betwix hem was a litel envye,
> Oon seyde, Omere made lyes,
> Feyninge in his poetryes,
> And was to Grekes favorable;
> Therfor held he hit but fable.

In the Middle Ages Englishmen firmly believed themselves to be of Trojan descent, and applauded those only amongst the narrators of the story of Troy who ministered to their national pride. On this ground they were particularly grateful to Geoffrey of Monmouth ("the English Gaufride"), who was almost as responsible for the renown of the legendary Brutus as for that of Arthur.

With Geoffrey's contribution to the matter we may begin. Before tracing the development of the romantic history of the Trojan War, we must first examine the basis of the widespread tradition of the blood connection of the Western peoples with the Trojan race. This was regarded in the Middle Ages in England almost as an axiom of historical truth. English chroniclers after the Conquest seldom failed to mention it; no reader ever dreamed of disputing the accuracy of his author's assertions. Had Milton, even in his time, written a national epic of Arthur, as he purposed, he would unquestionably have begun with this fable. Following Geoffrey, he would have recounted the journey of the Trojans to Britain and the deeds of their posterity, including the story of "Sabrina fair,"

Virgin, daughter of Locrine,
Sprung of old Anchises line.

Before Geoffrey, this voyage was believed in and recounted; but it was reserved for him to enlarge and elaborate the narrative with picturesque detail. Brutus, we learn, having set sail from Greece to establish for himself a new kingdom, and at a loss whither to direct his course, lands at a dispeopled island called Leogecia, to consult the oracle in an ancient temple of Diana. The Latin elegiacs which Geoffrey, his Virgil in mind, represents him as then uttering, Milton thus translates:

Goddess of Shades, and Huntress, who at will
Walk'st on the rolling sphere, and through the deep,
On thy third reign, the Earth, look now, and tell
What land, what seat of rest thou bidd'st me seek,
What certain seat, where I may worship thee
For aye, with temples vowed, and virgin quires.

And this is the reply that the warrior in a vision receives from the goddess:

Brutus, far to the West, in the ocean wide,
Beyond the realm of Gaul, a land there lies,
Sea-girt it lies, where giants dwelt of old;
Now void, it fits thy people. Thither bend
Thy course; there shalt thou find a lasting seat;
There to thy sons another Troy shall rise,
And kings be born of thee, whose dreaded might
Shall awe the world, and conquer nations bold.

Thus guided, Brutus makes his way with a brilliant company to Britain, where, after some struggles with giants and other opponents, he builds a new Troy.

Geoffrey's story gained universal credence. The account of the Trojan invasion was speedily accepted as a very ancient tradition, and the British plumed themselves in consequence of their supposed illustrious descent. As prone as we to romance about the past, our forbears of a thousand years ago willingly lengthened out the genealogy of their race by conjecture.

But not only were the British, as shown by Geoffrey, of Trojan descent: so also in other ways were the Franks, the Saxons, the Danes, and the Normans—in truth, almost all the nations of Western Europe. If Arthur belonged to the lineage of Trojan kings, so also did Odin and Charlemagne, Alfred the Great, Cnut, and William the Conqueror. To show how this was brought about would be too long a tale to tell here. It will be sufficient to indicate why it was a matter of great political and literary moment. On our ancestors in England its influence was threefold: it supported them in a feeling of national and personal dignity; it united them in sentiment with other races supposedly of the same blood; and it made them eager to hear the tales of antiquity.

Geoffrey surely did his best to arouse feelings of independence on this account. He represents Julius Cæsar as saying of the Britons when he first got a prospect of their land:

> In truth, we Romans and the Britons have the same origin, since both are descended from the Trojan race. Our first father, after the destruction of Troy, was Æneas; theirs, Brutus, whose father was Sylvius, the son of Ascanius, the son of Æneas. . . . Before the Romans offer to invade or assault them, we must send them word that they pay tribute as other nations do, and submit themselves to the senate; for fear we should violate the blood of our kinsmen.

In Cassibelaun's answer to Cæsar we see how their supposed origin may have engendered actual pride in the islanders:

> Your demand, Cæsar, is scandalous, since the same vein of nobility flows from Æneas in both Britons and Romans, and one and the same chain of consanguinity unites us; which ought to be a band of firm union and friendship. It was that which you should have demanded of us, and not slavery; we have learned to admit the one, but never to bear the other.

For this potent conviction, cherished by the people, literary men were in the beginning wholly responsible. By way of recompense, it helped to perpetuate the literature of antiquity. To the mediæval versions of the Trojan War we now turn.

The *Iliad* was epitomised, perhaps as early as the first cen-

tury, by Pindarus Thebanus, in a Latin poem of 1100 hexameter lines—a work composed, it is reported, for the convenience of the author's son, not inelegant, yet without much feeling for proportion or exactitude of fact, written more in the style of the Latin poets than the Greek. In the second century probably, there appeared in Greek a book of annals of the Trojan War, which circulated widely in a Latin redaction called the *Ephemeris Belli Trojani*, attributed to one Dictys Cretensis. This account professed to have been written by a participant in the siege of Troy, a Cretan of Gnossus, at first in the Phœnician language. It was enclosed, we are informed, in a tin chest and placed in the historian's tomb. In the thirteenth year of the reign of Nero, however, an earthquake opened the tomb, and the work, then rediscovered, was borne to the Emperor, who had it turned into Greek and placed in a library. Later it was translated into Latin. Strangely enough, this preposterous story was widely credited, and the history itself was regarded for many centuries as authoritative by the learned Greeks of the Lower Empire.

In the sixth century, probably, was written another work on the Trojan War, the object of which was plainly to destroy the effect of Dictys's account, which favoured the Greeks, by presenting the matter from a point of view flattering to the Trojans. Dares Phrygius, the fancied author, was proudly introduced to the world and represented as an eye-witness on the Trojan side, whose *Historia de Excidio Trojae* gave the true statement of the war. This impudent forgery, for which likewise ancient authority was claimed, is a flimsy document with no literary or historical value; but it was received with enthusiasm by all who believed in their Trojan descent, and in France particularly, where innumerable copies still exist, it was regarded as precious to a degree.

Apparently, it was more than once elaborated and extended in the course of time to satisfy the desires of those who wished more information than the inadequate account of Dares afforded. At all events, it seems necessary to assume a considerable develop-

ment of the story to explain the first important treatment of the theme in mediæval literature, that of the skilful French clerk Benoît de Ste. More (near Tours), who, about 1165, wrote a *Roman de Troie*, which at once became the standard account of the famous strife. Manuscripts quickly multiplied, despite the poem's great length of over 30,000 lines; it underwent redactions; it was translated into several languages; it was referred to in the Middle Ages countless times. The work was dedicated to Queen Eleanor, wife of Henry II. We need have no doubt the Anglo-Normans knew it well.

Benoît was a writer of no mean merit. His style is clear, fresh, and flowing. His story, being long-drawn-out and burdened with detail, is naturally monotonous in parts, but by compensation in others it is told with peculiar vigour and dramatic force. It is one of the chief productions of the most brilliant half-century of Old French literature. Then, too, were written a *Roman de Thèbes* and a *Roman d'Énéas*, remodellings of the works of Statius and Virgil, animated by the mediæval spirit. This spirit, it is important to observe, was not in the least that of antiquity. The writers of these "romances" paid no heed to what we now call "historical colour." They did not try to put themselves into the world of their heroes, to picture them as they really were, in the surroundings in which they actually lived. The *Roman de Troie* is a picture of life in mediæval France. The leading characters bear Greek and Roman names, to be sure, but they wear the apparel and equip themselves in the armour commonly used in Benoît's time. They inhabit castles with drawbridges and crenellated towers and donjon keeps, like those of the followers of Henry II. They carry on their warfare like feudal lords of his day; they act like them in times of peace, observe the same customs, are actuated by the same impulses, stimulated by the same faith. The worshippers of heathen gods have transferred their allegiance to the one supreme deity of the Bible. Calchas is represented as a Christian bishop, with a goodly provision of monks and cloisters under his

rule. The Trojans fast on appropriate occasions and swear by relics solemn oaths. The gods and goddesses of classical mythology, who are so influential in Homer's epic in directing the affairs of men, have entirely disappeared in Benoît's romance, rejected with incredulous scorn. On the other hand, the popular beliefs in fairies, demons, and occult spirits have left an obvious mark: Hector is loved by Arthur's sister Morgain the fay, and rides a magic horse he gets from her. We are astonished to find warriors with such names as Leopoldus de Rhodes, Doglas. Margariton, Brun de Gimel associating with famous heroes of the past. No explanation was given, for none was demanded. Benoît saw antiquity through a glass darkly, and relished the sight. He transmitted his cloudy vision to his contemporaries and they rejoiced with him. The French through his work got the same sort of view of Greece and Rome that Crestien gave them of ancient Britain. Benoît and Crestien were products of the same conditions; they lived in a personal age, when men saw themselves in the past, an era of interest to them almost entirely because it contributed to their enjoyment or fostered their pride. The strange transformation of the matter of Rome and Britain in their hands was perhaps as unconscious as inevitable.

Benoît's romance suffered an undeserved fate. It was largely superseded in popular favour by a Latin translation that professed to be based directly on Dares. This was the *Historia Destructionis Trojae* by Guido delle Colonne, which appeared in 1287, and (as is attested by the numerous extant manuscripts, and by the fact that it has been turned into some ten languages) attained lasting popularity. Guido was a judge at Messina in Sicily, and undertook to write at the invitation of the Archbishop of Salerno, Hugo de Porta. He was a learned man, and, though following Benoît in the main, made additions from various other sources, particularly Virgil and Ovid. Occasionally he gave himself loose rein in moral reflection. On women he was particularly severe. It was surely with intent to deceive that he made no mention of Benoît as a source.

Here we cannot discuss even the most important versions of the story of Troy, based on Benoît and Guido, in the various languages of Europe, though we might come thereby to a better understanding of one of the chief means by which men of different nationalities in the Middle Ages were welded together in a common sentiment. We must limit ourselves to English, in which many metrical versions appeared in and after the fourteenth century. Before examining them, however, it is well to recall the fact that the history was for centuries before familiar in French, and also that in 1187 or thereabouts had appeared Joseph of Exeter's Latin poem *De Bello Trojano*. Joseph shows unusual originality and skill in presenting material derived chiefly from Dares, Ovid, and Statius, perhaps also from Virgil.

The earliest extant English version of the story, a faithful translation of Guido, appears to be the alliterative poem, over 14,000 lines long, entitled *The Geste Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy*, which exists in a unique manuscript in the West Midland dialect. The author had considerable poetic power. His style is at times very vigorous and impressive. He introduces into the narrative passages that show him the heir of excellent traditions from the English past.

In the less significant poem *The Siege of Troy* (in short couplets) we seem to have a free abridgment of part of Benoît's romance, which the author had before him in a somewhat enlarged form—a form like that which Konrad von Würzburg used for his *Trojanerkrieg*, and Gower for some of the tales in the *Confessio Amantis*, a form which contained the Odyssey as well as the Trojan War. As the title indicates, the author's chief concern was with the siege of the city, and he therefore treats very succinctly the preceding events.

But of all the English versions of the legend as a whole, the best is certainly the Troy-book of Chaucer's devoted disciple, John Lydgate, monk of Bury St. Edmunds, which he began in 1412 or a little later, and when complete presented to Henry V. In 1513 it was printed by Pynson at the command of Henry VIII.,

under the title of *The History, Siege, and Destruction of Troy*, and afterwards by others with sundry changes. Lydgate based his poem, over 30,000 lines long, mainly on Guido; but he treated his material with much freedom, and in so doing added greatly to its charm. His descriptions of natural scenes, of festivals, combats, and the like are interesting and picturesque. Lydgate was a much better poet than he is usually reputed to be, and in many passages the Troy-book bears witness to his power. He moves freely in heroic couplets.

Several other versions of Guido, not yet printed, were written in the fifteenth century. Fragments of a Scottish version, in all about 3715 lines, are preserved in two copies of the Troy-book, to fill lacunæ. The poem from which they were taken must have been very long. It is ascribed to one Barbour, though whether or no he can be identified with the author of the *Bruce* is still a matter of dispute. But that version of Guido which was destined to become most popular in England, and supersede all the rest but Lydgate's, was contained in Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, a translation from the French prose of Raoul le Fevre. This work was compiled by the author in 1464 (four years only before the Order of the Golden Fleece was founded), at the command of Philip the Good of Burgundy. Caxton translated it in 1471, and a few years later, about 1474, put it in type, thus making it the first English printed book. It ran through no less than fourteen editions between 1503 and 1738, and within the last few years has been twice reprinted—not, surely, because of its merit.

The French metrical romance of Benoît and the Latin prose would-be history of Guido evidently enjoyed great popularity in England in Chaucer's time, as before and after. That Chaucer himself knew both intimately there is abundant evidence to show. It is possible that he may also have known Dares at first hand. He did not, however, decide, like so many of his contemporaries and successors, to recount again the whole story of the Trojan War, but chose rather to renew and revivify an episode of a

romantic, not a belligerent, character, the now famous love of Troilus and Cressida. In choosing this theme he was influenced by the example of his favourite author, Boccaccio, who had previously written a poem on the subject that served our great poet as a guide. Before discussing Chaucer's indebtedness to Boccaccio in this regard, we must first trace briefly the development of the theme.

Its beginnings are, in truth, somewhat obscure. We have now no literary treatment of the episode earlier than Benoît, and yet it is to be presumed that he did not wholly invent it. Dares, to be sure, says very little about Briseida (or Briseis, for such was the Greek name of Achilles' mistress), simply describing her among others of the Grecian camp; but what he says seems to indicate that her characteristics of appearance and disposition were then well known: "Briseidam formosam, alta statura, candidam, capillo flauo et molli, superciliis junctis, oculis venustis, corpore aequali, blandem, affabilem, verecundam, animo simplici, piam." Dares praises Troilus also; but he and Briseida are not connected. Apparently the tale of her love for Troilus and Diomed was somewhat developed in forms of the story now lost, so that Benoît's elaboration of the incident need not all be laid to the credit of his imagination, though undoubtedly he contributed much to its charm. In Benoît the emphasis is laid rather upon the way in which Diomed won the love of Briseida, which she had previously pledged to Troilus, than upon the manner of its first awakening by the Trojan hero.

Briseida is the maiden daughter of Calchas, who has deserted Troy to join the Greeks. She is loved by the hero Troilus, who is disconsolate when (an exchange of prisoners having been effected after the capture of Antenor) she leaves the Trojan camp to be united to her father. Diomed, the Greek, whose duty it is to conduct her to his camp, falls passionately in love with her, and finally succeeds in winning her regard. In a first combat with Troilus he overcomes him, and sends the steed he captures to Briseida. In another engagement, however, Troilus wounds him very severely, and vents his indignation on his former love because of the way she has deceived him. She, moved by pity for Diomed, then deprives Troilus even of her lingering

affection, and abandons herself wholly to his rival. Troilus apparently continues in indignant torment, while Diomed has the reward of his labour. But in the last ten thousand lines of Benoît's poem almost no mention is made of the affair.

This incident—it is no more—in the *Roman de Troie*, translated by Guido, seemed to Boccaccio a suitable framework for a poem which should express his own love. He too, like Troilus, had been deserted by a lady (the Princess Maria d'Aquino, natural daughter of the King of Naples, who has been immortalised by him as Fiammetta), and he determined under the cloak of Troilus to voice his sentiments towards her. Naturally, then, he placed the emphasis on the first rather than on the last amour of the lady. He pictures by preference Troilus in love, his disappointments and delights, his final sorrow. Griseida (for such now is the form of her name) he represents as a widow, not as a maiden, less frivolous and light-hearted than Benoît's heroine, more devoted to the Trojan hero, not so ready to transfer her affections to Diomed. Into the narrative Boccaccio introduces the character of Pandaro (the name from Benoît), whom he pictures as the lady's cousin, a gay young gallant, who strives complaisantly, and despicably, to compromise his innocent relative to satisfy a friend. The poem itself the author entitled *Il Filostrato*, The Conquered of Love; his contemporaries hailed it with satisfaction; and it remains one of the most interesting psychological love poems in the Italian language.

Il Filostrato was written between 1344 and 1350. Boccaccio was still living when, in 1373, Chaucer first visited Genoa and Florence. Before he travelled again to Italy, in 1378, the great writer had died. On one of these journeys south Chaucer probably became possessed of *Il Filostrato*, and this stimulated him to write a poem of his own on the same theme. About 1380, or perhaps earlier, appeared his *Troilus and Cressida*, a work of genius, which first revealed in him that great capacity as a narrator which came to full fruition in the *Canterbury Tales*.

For some reason not yet fully understood, Chaucer refrained

from mentioning Boccaccio or his work by name, though he does not claim originality for his material. Some have supposed that he was ignorant of the real authorship of the poem which he utilised so extensively; but this is hardly credible. Deliberately—there seems to be no way to avoid the conclusion—he mystified his readers by invoking the authority of one Lollius, whom, by his own misunderstanding of a passage in Horace, or, more likely, by that of some one before him, he believed to be a writer on the Trojan War; and he let it be understood that his source was in Latin. Chaucer certainly used both Guido and Benoît in the amplification of the story; but in *Troilus* he fails to mention them also. Perhaps the poet denied Boccaccio's name because he shared the mediæval feeling that a work dealing with a supposedly historical theme had to be bolstered up by remote authority, and Boccaccio was too modern to suit.

Il Filostrato is composed in the favourite Italian metre, the *ottava rima*, and contains 5352 lines. *Troilus* comprises 8239 lines in seven-line stanzas (rhyme royal). A careful comparison of the two works has shown that for nearly two-thirds of the poem we are indebted to Chaucer alone. His *Troilus* was, then, a new creation, distinctly superior to any treatment of the theme before or since.

We shall have occasion later to study Chaucer's art as displayed in this, his rehandling of Boccaccio's poem. Here it will suffice to remark that he changed the story in incident and emphasis, and greatly modified the characters of the leading actors. Pandarus, above all, is presented anew with consummate skill. He is no longer the gay young cousin of Cressida, but her middle-aged, experienced uncle, whose advice she might be expected to follow, and whose influence in behalf of Troilus was therefore the more effective in her undoing.

In Chaucer's, as indeed in nearly all versions of the story, Cressida is faithless to Troilus without disaster to herself. But such inconstancy as hers to a true lover was thought unseemly by those who clung to the ideas of the Courts of Love; and they

pictured the fickle lady as suffering justly an unhappy fate. Deserted by Diomed, and afflicted with leprosy, she dies in despair.

This conception appears in an admirable poem, the *Testament of Cresseid*, by the Scottish schoolmaster of Dunfermline, Robert Henryson. His work was deliberately arranged as a sequel to that of his master Chaucer. He had found in a book an account of "the fatal destiny of fair Cresseid, which ended wretchedly," and he felt that this might be the real situation.

> Who wots if all that Chaucer wrote was true?
> Nor I wot not if this narration
> Be authorised, or feigned of the new
> By some poet, through his invention
> Made to report the lamentation
> And woeful end of this lusty Cresseid,
> And what distress she tholëd, and what deid (death).

He represents Troilus as passing near the company of lepers among whom Cressida lived, and as tossing her a rich purse, because, though he does not recognise her, she reminds him of his beloved. Cressida, hearing who her benefactor is, breaks out into lamentation, utters her last testament, and dies.

A mention in *Henry V.* of the "lazar kite of Cressid's kind" seems to show Shakspere's acquaintance with this version of the story; but in his *Troilus and Cressida* it does not appear. The great dramatist for some reason deliberately debased the characters and vulgarised the situation. His treatment lacks all Chaucer's sympathy and delicacy.

Shakspere's play was remodelled by Dryden in 1679 under the title, *Troilus and Cressida, or Truth Found Too Late.* When Sir Walter Scott republished this, he took occasion to remark that in this redaction the tale had still further deteriorated, coarseness being changed to ribaldry. Dryden "suppressed some of his [Shakspere's] finest poetry, and exaggerated some of his worst faults."

The Story of Thebes

In Chaucer's *Troilus* is depicted a fascinating mediæval scene in a lady's dwelling. Cressida is sitting in her "paved parlour" with two companions, listening to a maiden who reads aloud "the geste of the Siege of Thebes." Suddenly Pandarus enters. Apologetic for his interruption, he asks what book they are occupied with. Cressida, in welcoming him, thus makes reply:

> "This romaunce is of Thebes, that we rede;
> And we han herd how that King Laius deyde
> Thurgh Edippus his sone, and al that dede;
> And here we stenten at these lettres rede,
> How the bisshop, as the book can telle,
> Amphiorax, fil thurgh the ground to helle."
> Quod Pandarus, "Al this knowe I my-selve,
> And al the assege of Thebes and the care,
> For her-of been ther maked bokes twelve."

Later in the same poem, Cassandra, the sister of Troilus, when interpreting his dream, epitomises the whole story; and in the manuscripts the arguments of the twelve books are given in Latin.

Statius' *Thebaid* formed, of course, the basis of the Old French "romance" of Thebes, which was written by an anonymous poet in the twelfth century, slightly earlier than that of Troy, and in the same general style that Benoît employed. It made widely familiar in mediæval Europe the substance of Statius' narrative, but did not replace it. The Latin poem was familiar to all cultivated men in England throughout the Middle Ages, and was one of Chaucer's favourite works; but not from it directly did he derive the material for the famous poem that embodies it in part, the Knight's Tale of *Palamon and Arcite*: this is based on an Italian poem, *Il Teseide*, of Boccaccio. Soon after writing *Troilus*, and with it in mind, Chaucer again followed the method he had

adopted there : he reconstructed with surpassing power a work of his Italian contemporary, and again failed to mention his source. Here the poet was even more independent of his original than in *Troilus*. The *Teseide* has 9054 lines, the *Knight's Tale* but 2250, and of these only a small proportion are paralleled in the Italian. Chaucer's changes are seen in the metre, the plan, and the style of the poem, as well as in its length. He chooses the heroic couplet instead of the stanza used by Boccaccio ; he unifies the interest by curtailing distracting episodes ; he manages, by the introduction of lifelike incident and characteristic detail, to make the scenes of the narrative fairly real.

> Whylom, as olde stories tellen us,
> Ther was a duk that highte Theseus ;
> Of Athenes he was lord and governour,
> And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
> That gretter was ther noon under the sonne.

These, the opening lines, transfer us at once into the mediæval atmosphere of formal chivalry, an atmosphere of aristocratic remoteness and exaggerated distinction. Chaucer could have chosen no more suitable tale for the Knight, the noblest and highest of station among his pilgrims. The melody of his verse is nowhere more rich.

The tale of Palamon and Arcite provided the plots of several Elizabethan plays. One by Richard Edwards was produced at Oxford in 1566 before the Queen herself. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, attributed to Shakspere and Fletcher, was printed in 1634. Dryden competed more obviously with Chaucer in his own style. Though his *Palamon and Arcite* has genuine merit, Chaucer's poem still remains unrivalled.

The works of Chaucer and his imitators dealt only with an episode in the tale of Thebes. The need of an English version of the whole account was felt in the fifteenth century, and this the laborious Lydgate, undertaking, as usual, to do what his master had left undone, was able to supply. Utilising, it seems, some prose redaction of the Old French romance, he told the tale *in extenso*

about 1420. Stupidly, he brought his work into connection with Chaucer's: he represents himself as meeting the pilgrims by chance at Canterbury, and as being invited by the Host to tell the first story on the return journey. We cannot avoid making a comparison between it and that of the Knight, the first on the way to the shrine. Lydgate borrowed freely from Chaucer's very words, but his achievement is vastly inferior. We deplore his bad judgment and presumption. His contemporaries seem to have applauded him, however, and scribes took lavish care in reproducing his work.

Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, and Claudian are also mentioned by Chaucer as high on pillars in the House of Fame. Their works cannot occupy us long here because, though much read in Latin, they were but little reproduced in the vernacular. It should be noted, however, that, like the other classical epics, the *Iliad* and the *Thebaid*, the *Æneid* was transformed into a French romance of adventure about the same time. Like the rest, it seems to us almost a travesty of the ancient account, but it was not so intended; and, judged without prejudice, we must admit it to be at least entertaining. Later, unavoidably, it became sodden in prose. In 1483 appeared a French prose redaction called the *Livre des Eneydes*, and this Caxton translated for English readers in 1490.

Ovid perhaps deserves an added word because of the extreme popularity of his tales in the Middle Ages. His *Metamorphoses* particularly was a great storehouse of myth and legend, from which both clergy and laity, ascetics and lovers, drew material about which to moralise as their inclination dictated. Ovid's stories became common property. They were repeated in many compendiums of information and amusement. So accessible, indeed, was the "matter of Rome" in mediæval forms that it is hard to say whence any one author drew a particular tale. Thus, for example, the narrative of Appius and Virginia, told by the Doctor on the pilgrimage, probably derives from the *Roman de la Rose*, and not from Livy, where it is best known. Henryson

relied on Nicholas Trivet in his pleasant version of Orpheus and Eurydice.

References to the heroes and heroines of antiquity are innumerable in mediæval literature of every type.

The Matter of the Orient

The Oriental contribution to the narrative literature of the West was chiefly in the form of the tale; but some of its offerings may properly be termed romance.

The most important of these is the legendary history of Alexander the Great, one of the most popular narratives that the world has ever known. Not only in various languages of Asia and Africa, but also in almost every one in Europe, some account of Alexander's exploits was current; and in England stories concerning him had a continuous history from the close of the Anglo-Saxon period to the accession of Elizabeth. Versions are extant in Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-French, and Anglo-Latin, as well as in Middle English and Scottish, of different dialects and dates. It was, in truth, as Chaucer said in the Monk's Tale:

> The storie of Alisaundre is so comune,
> That every wight that hath discrecioun
> Hath herd somwhat or al of his fortune.

The monk exalts Alexander to the position of a peerless emperor, the flower of knighthood and freedom, the heir of Fortune's honour, so full of leonine courage that

> Save wyn and wommen, no-thing mighte aswage
> Hys hye entente in armes and labour.

All the world quaked for dread of him. All of it he

> welded in his demeyne,
> And yit him thoughte it mighte nat suffyse
> So ful was his corage of heigh empryse.

Darius, and an hundred thousand mo,
Of kinges, princes, erles, dukes bolde,
. . he conquered, and broghte hem in to wo.
I seye, as fer as man may ryde or go,
The world was his, what sholde I more devyse,
For thogh I write or tolde you evermo
Of his knighthode, it mighte nat suffyse.

The Alexander legend had taken shape before the Christian era in a Greek work known as the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*. This contains, in germ at least, the whole fabulous history of the Macedonian king, yet was itself a culmination of previous reports of diverse character brought together by scholars of Alexandria to enhance his glory and spread his fame. Though some twenty manuscripts of this Greek work exist, no one probably represents its original form; but, by a comparison of various translations or versions in Latin, Syriac, and Armenian, it can be restored pretty accurately to its third-century form.

It reached Western peoples through two Latin redactions; one by Julius Valerius, written before 340, of which an epitome, prepared in the ninth century, afterwards became very popular; another the *Historia Alexandri Magni, Regis Macedoniae, de Proeliis*, made by Leo the Archpresbyter after his return journey from an embassy to Constantinople, on behalf of the Dukes of Campania, in the tenth century. Sometimes connected with one or other of these were certain independent works: (1) a letter of Alexander to Aristotle on the marvels of India; (2) a body of correspondence between Alexander and Dindimus, King of the Brahmins; and (3) an account of Alexander's journey to Paradise —all of which are found separately.

The Alexander legend was one of the first to be redacted in Old French. Towards the end of the eleventh century, Leo's work was translated into French verse by the Provençal Albéric de Briançon; but only the beginning is left. Later, in twelve-syllable verse (which, because of its employment in this work, got the name of alexandrine), was produced a great *Roman d'Alixandre*, over 20,000 lines long, by two writers, Lambert li Tort (Crooked)

and Alexandre de Bernay. Here we see again the mediæval disregard of anachronisms and the romantic style applied to ancient would-be history. In Alexander the authors strove primarily to exalt the chivalric virtues of the Middle Ages, especially largess. He was represented by them more as a model knight than as an invincible conqueror.

The first section of the story of Alexander to be put into English was the apocryphal journey to Paradise, which was turned into Anglo-Saxon prose before the Conquest. Next comes a work showing the reactionary desire to perpetuate fact rather than fable: about the middle of the twelfth century a monk of St. Albans made in Latin a skilful compilation of passages concerning Alexander from supposedly trustworthy historians. This work, so commendable in purpose, had nevertheless little influence in England. Its object was set at nought by an English clerk of Chaucer's time, who decided to combine with it the *Epitome* of Valerius, in order that he might provide an example for the imitation of youths, by which they might be encouraged to eschew idleness and vice.

In the thirteenth century an English ecclesiastic, Eustace of Kent, made over the French *Roman*, introducing also some more historical material drawn from various sources. His work, entitled the *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, served as the source of the best English poem on the subject, namely, *King Alisaunder*, the production of an anonymous poet of the end of the thirteenth century. *King Alisaunder* contains over 8000 lines in couplets, and may have been written by the same author as *Arthur and Merlin*. Between these two epic-romances there is evident likeness in saga material, which was treated in both in the same way; both were written in Kent at about the same time; above all, both exhibit a marked similarity in the literary device of beginning different sections of the story with a lyric or descriptive passage, which is not paralleled elsewhere in Middle English poetry of the same sort. Thus, for example, the second part begins:

Fair be tales in company ;
Merry in church is melody ;
Evil may the slow hie,
And worse may blind siweye (pursue).
Who that hath true amie,
Jolly he may him in her afye (confide).
I wot the best is Marie :
She us shield from villainy !

And another chapter :

In time of harvest merry it is enow ;
Pears and apples hangeth on bough.
The hayward bloweth merry his horn ;
In euery field ripe is corn ;
The grapes hang on the vine :
Sweet is true love and fine.

Peculiar similes and comparisons occur in both works alike, and the same method of rhyming in clusters. From the frequent references to common trades it may be inferred that the author was not a man of high rank. He was master, at all events, of an animated and easy style, pictured scenes graphically, and no doubt sustained the interest of his auditors in his borrowed theme.

Three fragments of alliterative poems on Alexander were composed between the years 1350 and 1375. Of these two may have belonged to a single work formerly of great length (one contains 5680 lines) entitled *The Wars of Alexander.* Its chief source was, it seems, Leo's *De Proeliis*, a text with interpolations being perhaps used.

These English poems, like their sources, are largely concerned with the long succession of wars that the Emperor waged against Eastern potentates ; yet they do not lack the allurement of magic and marvel. A brief outline of the legend follows :

Alexander is the child of Olympias, wife of King Philip of Macedon, begotten by Nectanebus, an Egyptian, through the power of his sorcery : the queen is persuaded that the god Ammon will appear to her, and she readily receives the attentions of the disguised magician. Prodigies at the birth of her

boy indicate that he will be master of the world. He shows his right to rule by his signal success in taming the wild, carnivorous horse Bucephalus (Bulsifal). He early does valorous deeds, avenges an insult on Nicholas, King of Peloponnesus, and prevents his father from rejecting Olympias. When he ascends the throne, he builds Alexandria, takes Tyre, is nobly received at Jerusalem, and burns Thebes. Being defied and sent foolish presents by Darius, he wages a long war against him, which ends by his overcoming his foe and winning the Persian throne. He then turns his attention to the gigantic Porrus of India, whom he puts to flight. He advances steadily and strongly even to the Ganges, the limit of his march. His return journey is marked by the many bewildering marvels that he encounters. All sorts of strange creatures and creations appear before him. Trees are seen that wax and wane in a day, mysterious woods filled with giants, valleys full of crowned snakes, cliffs covered with diamonds. The sun-tree of gold and the moon-tree of silver address him in prophecy. Mounted on Bucephalus, he has a great fight with griffins. In an iron car raised by four of these fabulous creatures, he ascends into the air. In an airtight glass vessel he descends into the sea. The rich storehouse of Babylonian and other ancient fable was rifled to afford him experience; he is granted every sort of amazing trial. His death, at last, is due to treason: he is poisoned by a trusted friend, whom he has mildly rebuked. The earth (in some versions) is made to quake at his passing away; the sun is darkened; the lamentation of the people sounds like the moan of thunder; he is buried in Alexandria in a tomb of gold.

The author of *King Alisaunder* considered the tale as "delicious" to listen to. He does not fail, however, to express in a closing couplet his deep regret that Alexander was not of the Christian fold.

In one of the alliterative poems was made accessible to English readers the imaginary correspondence between Alexander and Dindimus, King of the Brahmins, composed by an ecclesiastic to discuss certain ethical problems rather than to convey historical information. Dindimus maintains that the contemplative life of his people is superior to the active life pursued by Alexander and his folk, and that their religion is likewise better than that of the Greeks. The discussion comes to no conclusion, and is simply a well-balanced display of opposing contentions.

King Alisaunder and *The Wars* deal with the romantic *enfances* and the whole wonderful performance of Alexander. In

a very long Scottish poem, the *Buik of the Most Noble and Vailyeand Conqueror Alexander the Great*, we have rather an account of certain episodes in which in his later career he plays a more or less conspicuous part. The work contains three principal divisions: *The Foray of Gadderis* (Gadres, Gaza), *The Avows of Alexander*, and *The Great Battle of Effesoun.* The first is from the French *Fuerre de Gadres*, by one Eustace, probably introduced into the *Roman* by Alexandre de Bernay; and the other two from the *Vœux du Paon*, by Jacques de Longueyon (*c.* 1312, or earlier)—both independent compositions, "antique" neither in contents nor in spirit, but very popular in the fourteenth century.

The *Foray* recounts an interesting conflict during the siege of Tyre between a detachment of Alexander's army under Emynedus and the host of Gaza under Betys, in which the Gaderan Gandifer especially distinguishes himself by his heroism in maintaining the struggle most vigorously while his fellows are beating a retreat. The Grecians are in a fair way to be overcome by their opponents, when Alexander is apprised of their perilous position and comes to their rescue.

In the *Avows* it is related how Porrus, the Indian prince, shoots a peacock, which is later daintily dressed and served at a fine repast. On this bird each one at the repast makes a vow to behave valorously or nobly in one way or another; and the poem tells how in the Great Battle of Effesoun, when they oppose Alexander's host, most of them accomplish their brags, and how their strife ends happily with bridal, pomp, and festival.

Though the *Buik* is only extant in a print of 1580, and though this states that it was composed in 1438, the work has been very plausibly attributed to John Barbour, on the evidence of nearly identical style. It is certain in any case that Barbour was thoroughly familiar with the Alexander story. He compares his hero Bruce to Gandifer, like him in valorous achievement, but not suffering the same sad fate. Telling of the winning of Edinburgh Castle by Earl Thomas Randall, he recalls the siege of Tyre, when Alexander surmounted the wall of Babylon and fought until nearly dead, before he was rescued by his "noble chivalry."

In fact, Alexander was particularly popular in Scotland. Wyntoun, Lyndesay, and Blind Harry refer to him; and, likewise in the fifteenth century (1494), Sir Gilbert Hay, at the instance of Lord Erskine, composed a poem about him (not yet published) containing some 20,000 lines in couplets. Hay was a cultivated courtier, who was engaged, he tells us, in the king's service in France for twenty-four years. He relates the whole history of Alexander from his birth to his death. He gives only 2500 lines to the Foray and Avows, which occupy some 14,000 in the *Buik*.

Despite the great extent of his history, Alexander's personality is as vague, as little individualised, as that of Arthur. He is simply a typical invincible conqueror or generous knight. The English and Scotch had no interest in him because of any reputed connection with their national life; but they listened eagerly like children to the wonders of his travels in the Orient. They heard of the strange creatures that occupied India with the same absorbed interest that the travels of Sir John Mandeville once aroused. This, however, was a diversion pure and simple. Even as our curiosity takes us over and over again to see the eccentric animals in a menagerie, so our ancestors, not favoured like us by actual exhibitions, enjoyed graphic accounts of creatures puzzlingly peculiar. When we remember also that they had abundant satisfaction and experience in warfare, we are not surprised at the hero's tremendous popularity. The marvellous is perennially attractive; far-away lands allure the imagination now as in the past; tales of fabulous beings and fanciful achievements still rivet our attention; and Alexander the Great, who sighed for more lands to conquer, is even to this day a name to conjure with.

The matter of the Orient is well exemplified by Chaucer's Squire's Tale, which is probably based on an Arabian story that the Moors bore to Spain, akin to the source of the French metrical romance of *Cléomadès* by the Brabantian poet Adenet le Roi (1275-1283). This is the tale of the "great bard" that Milton specially mentions in *Il Penseroso*:

Or call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife.
And who had Canace to wife,
That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride.

The Oriental cast of the tale is manifest from the names of the characters, the magic presents tendered Cambynskan (Kanghis Khan) by the stranger knight on behalf of his master, the king of Arabia and India, and certain underlying conceptions, such as the belief in metempsychosis.

Whatever may have been the nature of Chaucer's immediate source, whatever the relation of that source to the Travels of Marco Polo, the Squire's Tale is essentially a romance. It proceeds with easy rapidity for 672 lines, and then, much to our regret, suddenly breaks off. But the poet had the whole tale developed before him: he indicates before he stops the course of the ensuing narrative. With this tale and that of the Knight as evidence, no one can deny that Chaucer greatly enjoyed romance, and excelled in its writing. It was not the early courtly poems, but the late "rhymes" of common minstrels that he parodied in *Sir Thopas.*

Other Romances

Byzantine and Early French—Reminiscent—Legendary—"The Nine Worthies"

We have traced the history of the chief "matters" of romance represented in English. But more than a score of romantic poems remain for our consideration, which, though sometimes linked with one or another of the main cycles, do not properly belong to any one of them. Except in a few instances, they are inferior in literary value, though among the most popular that are preserved.

First may be mentioned the originally Greek story of *Apollonius of Tyre*, which is extant in an Anglo-Saxon prose version, apparently the oldest translation of the Latin text into any Western vernacular. It is a faithful rendering of a tale which was very different from anything that the Saxon temper alone developed, revealing a style of sentiment at which rugged warriors could only have marvelled without understanding it, and yet one which may have captivated them by its very unlikeness to anything in their own experience. The tale was thrice translated into Middle English verse, most notably by Gower, whose account (drawn from the Latin) alone is complete. It is the longest and one of the best-told tales of the *Confessio Amantis*, the one with which Gower chose to end his great thesaurus of moralised fiction. Chaucer, it will be remembered, thought it an "unkind abomination," a "horrible" story, and went out of his way to gibe at the "moral Gower" for rehearsing it. From Gower's poem, supplemented by a prose version that was englished from the French by Lawrence Twine in 1576, the plot of the Shaksperian play, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, was drawn.

The Byzantine romances differ markedly from the Arthurian in their portrayal of lovers' emotions. Sentimentality rather than passion is exhibited in the famous story of *Floris and Blanche-flour*, which appeared in English about the same time as *Sir Tristram* and offers to it a strange contrast. The hero is a youth of high station who loves a young captive and almost dies of a broken heart when separated from her by his parents. After many vicissitudes the two are reunited and made happy.

How the story got to France, where the oldest literary version exists, and whence it spread to other lands, we are unable to say definitely. At all events, two distinct renderings appear there alongside of each other. The earlier, "aristocratic" one pictures the hero primarily as a gentle, love-lorn boy; the later, "popular" one as a bold fighter, an opponent of heathen kings, a deliverer of distressed cities. Oriental yield to Western impulses in action, sensuous charm to vehement vigour. It was the

aristocratic version that was translated into English. Similar material was remodelled to its great advantage in the exquisite twelfth-century *cantefable* of *Aucassin et Nicolete*, which Mr. Andrew Lang has so admirably done into English:

Who would list to the good lay
Gladness of the captive grey?
'Tis how two young lovers met,
Aucassin and Nicolete,
Of the pains the lover bore
And the sorrows he outwore,
For the goodness and the grace
Of his love, so fair of face.

Sweet the song, the story sweet,
There is no man hearkens it,
No man living 'neath the sun,
So outwearied, so foredone,
Sick and woeful, worn and sad,
But is healèd, but is glad,
'Tis so sweet.

In one redaction of *Floris*, the heroine is represented as the mother of Bertha, surnamed "of the big foot," the wife of Pepin, father of Charlemagne. Caught similarly in the eddy of Carlovingian tradition was the tale of *Parthenopeus de Blois*, as contained in the charming poem of the end of the twelfth century ascribed to Denis Pyramus, nearly 11,000 lines long, and yet so excellently wrought that it keeps continuous hold on the reader's attention. The tale is usually regarded as simply a version of the Cupid and Psyche legend, with the rôles reversed; but it is really quite different, the points of contact not being essential features of the romance. At bottom it seems to be rather the account of a fay's relations with a mortal lover. In induction and other features it resembles the Breton lays of *Guingamor*, *Guigemar*, and *Lanval*; in development, the romances of *Ivain* and *The Fair Unknown*. The tale itself has all the allurement of the Otherworld vision. It is rationalised, to be sure, but only superficially. Any one familiar with the matter of Britain recognises under the surface Celtic

tradition of singular purity. Yet we have not this alone. Partheno-peus is not simply the hero of a romantic love-episode, the beloved of the fairy queen Melior, an enraptured and desperate knight, to whom in the end comes transcendent joy; he is also a warrior of amazing strength, a Count of Blois, the son of King Clovis; and it is in the forest of the Ardennes that he is hunting when he finds the marvellous fairy boat which carries him to his lady-love. He leaves her, with her permission, to defend his land from the incursions of the Saracens of the North, that is, the Scandinavians, and fights valiantly "que la France ne soit honie." Clotaire is besieged at Pontoise by a Norse king Sornegur, who desires his land. The duel between him and Parthenopeus is described at great length in the style of the national epic. By a splendid victory the hero brings relief to the nation.

The story of *Parthenope* became popular all over Europe as well as in England. The best English version (in rhymed couplets), though over 8000 lines long, is but a fragment. The author, who wrote in the first half of the fifteenth century, refuses to vouch for the truth of his tale, throwing all the responsibility on the French poet, whose work he tries to reproduce exactly. This, however, he does only in substance, not in spirit; for he was neither very refined himself, nor wrote, it would seem, for gentlefolk. Like most of the English translators of French chivalric romances, he was willing to omit descriptive and other delicate ornament. Once, for example, getting a little impatient at reciting minutely the details of a lady's dress, he advises those interested in such matters to consult the original. As for him, he begs to be excused. It would take too long, he urges, and moreover is "needless":

> For each man wots well without les (in truth)
> A lady that is of high degree
> Arrayed in the best manner must needs be.

The fairy boat of Melior, it is plain, was like that of Spenser's "Wanton Damsell" which carries Cymochles and Guyon to her "pleasant Île":

> More swift than swallow sheres the liquid skye,
> Withouten care or Pilot it to guide,
> Or winged canvas with the wind to fly—

like those "wondrous ships, self-moved, instinct with mind," that Alcinous commends to Ulysses in the eighth book of the *Odyssey*.

Similarly nationalised was the Old French tale of *Amis et Amiles*, which appears in a thirteenth-century English redaction of uncommon interest. This is a "chançoun d'amur, de leauté, e de grant douçur," in which the devotion of two foster-brothers is related in a really touching narrative. We remember the two heroes along with Roland and Oliver, Orestes and Pylades.

Amiloun takes the place of Amis in a trial by combat, and no one is the wiser, for they are marvellously alike in appearance. Amiloun is later afflicted with leprosy and is treated despitefully by his wife, so that he flees from his own land. Accidentally he is discovered in a pitiful condition by Amis, whose life he has previously saved, and the latter, warned by an angel that the only way in which his friend can be cured is by being anointed with the blood of his (Amis's) children, he slays them and restores his friend to health. When together in sorrow Amis and his wife visit the bedside of the slain children, they find that they have been restored to life by miracle, and are as if nothing had happened.

The story of *Amis and Amiloun* is really a legend, in which the domestic relations of the characters are emphasised more than their warfare, and Christian faith is paramount. In one Old French version it is transformed into a *chanson de geste*. The two noble knights enter Charlemagne's service, and aid him against his enemies. The traitorous steward who plots to injure Amis is of Ganelon's kin. It is the Emperor's daughter who offers her love to Amiles (Amis in the English). As a picture of ancient customs and feudal conditions, the poem has value apart from its literary worth.

Parthenopeus appears to be a combination of diverse conceptions, like the lay of *Orfeo*. Much more artificial was the construction of certain romances of English origin that we may term "reminiscent," in which various stock episodes are simply

linked together according to the author's fancy. The practice of concocting romances began as early as the twelfth century, when Hugh of Rutland wrote his *Ypomedon* and *Protesilaus*. Of the former, which reminds us at every turn of some other story, we have no less than three distinct English versions, one a poem of 8890 lines written in a lively style.

Sir Generides, another romance of a purely artificial character, shows borrowings from *Ypomedon* as well as from various other Old French poems. Its most prominent feature is a magic stag-hunt, such as we meet in Marie's lay of *Guigemar*. Two independent metrical versions are extant in unique manuscripts of Lydgate's time, and connected with works of his. One has some 10,000 lines in couplets, the other some 7000 in rhyme royal, the former showing a constant tendency to expand the separate incidents of its original, the latter preserving more unity and proportion but less easy in style. The source of both was probably an Anglo-Norman poem of the same date and nature as *Ypomedon*, but this has disappeared.

On the other hand, the *Squire of Low Degree*, likewise an English production of the first half of the fifteenth century, appears to have had no single original.

This is the story of a Squire in love with a king's daughter, who agrees to marry him when he shall have proved himself a worthy knight. She will be faithful to him for seven years. A false steward accuses the Squire to the king, and arranges a trap for him : the youth is set upon when he comes to the lady's chamber to bid her farewell. He pleads with her to "undo" her door, but she delays too long : when finally she draws the bar, she discovers what she supposes to be the dead body of her lover, so hacked as to be unrecognisable. Sadly she places the corpse in a chest, which she keeps by her in her room, and refuses to be comforted. It appears, however, that it is the body of the steward on which she wastes her tears. The Squire has slain him, and yet has been permitted by the king to undertake his projected career. When, at the end of seven years, the princess is about to enter a convent, the youth returns, famous from his wars in Lombardy, and relieves her distress. They wed merrily.

In England formerly, Squires of Low Degree were exceedingly

popular figures, whom the general run of folk loved to hear about, even as to-day they read with relish of ambitious youths successful, despite many obstacles, in attaining rank and power.

There is not much plot in such tales as these embodying the "exile and return" motive, which the English did to death, and practically no psychology; but the *Squire* is interesting for a certain freshness of narration, and because of its long lists of birds, trees, viands, wines, musical instruments, and armour, which the author enumerates with fond care and considerable skill. Here may be found material of value in reconstructing the luxurious life of decadent chivalry, the spectacle and pomp of Lancastrian knights.

In *Sir Degrevant*, another tale of the same period, reminding one of *The Earl of Tolouse*, other aspects of the same life are presented in the interesting passages which describe the chamber of the beautiful Melidore. On the walls were painted scenes from the Apocalypse, the Epistles of St. Paul, and the Parables of Solomon; the four Evangelists, with Austin, Gregory, Jerome, and Ambrose at their feet; the philosophers; besides stories of Absalom, Charlemagne, Godefroy, and Arthur. There was a "royal roof" adorned with jewels. The floor was of clear crystal covered with pall. On the brightly-coloured bed was painted the whole story of Amadas and Ydoine. The curtains of the bed ran on gold rings. The feast included every dainty. And while Sir Degrevant partook, his winsome lady sat "harping notes full sweet."

> Such mirths they move
> In the chamber of love,
> Thus they slay care.

We next come to a series of romances of a legendary character, of which we have had parallels in *Guy of Warwick* and *Beves*. Their popularity seems to have been very great among the common people, and perhaps among the inartistic higher classes, no doubt because of their religious and warlike character. To us they are distasteful, if not ridiculous. It is unfair, however, to take them seriously, as so many literary historians do, as

indicating a general crudeness of literary sense in the time when they were written. They are for the most part the work of humble clerks or ordinary minstrels, whom the cultivated ignored or scorned. The majority of those who heeded them were such as had no knowledge of better things. Foolish melodramas are to-day vociferously applauded in many country, even in some city, theatres. Claptrap sentimental and historical novels have now a bewildering sale. But not by these should the best sentiment of our time be judged.

Somewhat apart from the rest, by reason of its metre and distinguished patronage, stands the long alliterative romance *William of Palerne*, which was translated from the French at the command of Sir Humphrey de Bohun (cousin of Edward III.) about 1350. It had originally been written for the Countess Yolande of Hainaut, a relative of Baldwin VI., who in 1204 was elected Emperor of Constantinople. Naturally enough, the Crusaders were most interested in events localised about the Mediterranean, and they read of fights with Saracens, of deeds of individual heroism, of amorous adventures, of intrigue, deceit, and marvel, with the satisfaction of recalled experience.

The chief hero of the romance is a werewolf, the heir to the throne of Spain, who has been transformed into this shape by a stepmother. He saves the young William, son of the King of Apulia, from murder, swims with him across the Straits of Messina, and later in his career helps him on opportune occasions, when, for example, he is fleeing in disguise from Rome with the princess Melior, whose love he has won while serving her as a squire of low degree. William at last recovers his kingdom, has the werewolf's charm reversed, and arranges marriages for all who could be made to match.

In the *King of Tarsus* we have a legendary tale of how a whole land was christianised by the instrumentality of a lady, who is guided by dreams and supported by miracles. The facts appear to have been drawn from the chronicles of Thomas of Walsingham and Matthew of Westminster.

The daughter of the King of Tarsus marries a "heathen hound," the Sultan of Damascus, to keep him from devastating her father's realm, pre-

tending to accept his belief. Her first child is stillborn and shapeless. The father's prayers to Tervagant do not avail to give it life and limb, but after baptism in the name of the Lord it becomes vigorous and beautiful. When the Sultan thereupon accepts Christianity, he is himself made fair of face. He requires all his subjects to embrace his new faith or else be hanged. Five kings who object are speedily despatched—all to the glory of God !

A legend akin to that of Constance in the *Man of Law's Tale* is found with variations in *Octavian* and *Sir Triamour*. The former exists in two versions of about the middle of the fourteenth century, one of which in a Northern dialect, and based directly on an early French version (the inferior Kentish version may rely on a Latin intermediary), is told with considerable vigour and good effect. *La Bone Florence de Rome*, similar in character, is also a poem of decided merit despite the absurdities of its theme. Here false stewards calumniate innocent women, and gullible husbands subject them to shame. Foster-parents rear desolate children, who later reveal marvellous strength, rescue princesses from giants and dragons, and otherwise show themselves off. Fierce beasts commit rapine, and kindly ones afford succour. The fortuitous produces extraordinary complications. Miracles are as common as meals.

The closely allied *Sir Eglamour of Artois* and *Torrent of Portugal*, of later date, are still more insipid. Sir Eglamour successfully achieves three terrible struggles for his Christabel, only to discover on his return that, like Constance, she has been put to sea in a rudderless boat, for bearing him a son before their marriage. This son, Degrabell, is carried away on the journey by a griffin. When he grows up, he is, like his prototype, Degare, married to his mother, and almost consummates the unnatural alliance. At the festival tournament he unhorses every opponent except his father Eglamour, who fortunately turns up just then, to the delight of Christabel.

In *Sir Isumbras* is preserved a very popular version of the legend of Placidas (St. Eustace), a preposterous ecclesiastical romance. The hero is a knight humbled by God in every con-

ceivable way, who lives long enough nevertheless to learn that all things worked together for his spiritual good. The Lord ruined his possessions, deprived him of his wife and children, made him endure exposure and hardship beyond measure, all apparently with the purpose of teaching him humility and testing his patience. He is another Job, who accepts his misfortunes with resignation, and finally regains his wife, children, and rich lands.

Robert of Sicily inculcates similar doctrine by the much more entertaining—indeed, the quite charming—story of an angel who usurps the king's place that the latter's pride may be subdued. This is one of the well-known *Tales of the Wayside Inn*, told there with full sympathy; for, like the student he so agreeably describes, Longfellow himself

> loved the twilight that surrounds
> The border-land of old romance;
> Where glitter hauberk, helm, and lance,
> And banner waves, and trumpet sounds,
> And ladies ride with hawk on wrist,
> And mighty warriors sweep along,
> Magnified by the purple mist,
> The dusk of centuries and of song.

From such legendary characters as these we turn to heroes of actuality, to real Crusaders, whose deeds notwithstanding were clouded by romantic fable. Notably is this the case with our own picturesque king:

> Richard, that robb'd the lion of his heart,
> And fought the holy wars in Palestine.

On the basis of a lost Anglo-French original was written at the close of the thirteenth century the English romance (over 7000 lines long) of *Richard Coer de Lyon*. The author is perhaps identical with that of *Arthur and Merlin* and *King Alisaunder*, having, at all events, the same abundant vigour, the same delight in fight, the same rough humour. He too lived in Kent.

We cannot follow in detail the story of Richard's prowess and conquest, though, as the poet says, "it is full good to hear." No tender spirit characterises the dauntless hero, but wilful arrogance and violent hardihood. Richard appears at times like what his opponents thought him, "the devil incarnate." In one instance, for example, he gleefully prepares for the messengers of Saladin a ghastly meal. Before all his guests at the table are placed platters with the heads of their relatives thereon steaming hot. From the dish before him the king eats with good-will, while the messengers sit petrified with horror. Richard bids them not be "squeamish," but set to. He tells them that it is his regular custom to have as a first course "Saracen heads all hot," and feigns astonishment when they show no appetite for the other dainties he puts before them. They bear back to their master the cannibal message, that since the English find the flesh of the Saracens more nourishing than any other, they do not intend to return to England until all their opponents are eaten.

The perversity of Richard's disposition the English poet made an effort to explain as due to his having a mother of unearthly race.

Complying with the urgent request of his barons that he take a bride, King Henry sends messengers in all directions to discover the fairest woman alive. While sailing on the sea, they meet a white boat most wonderful, in which they recognise the lady they seek. The beautiful being therein, called Cassadorien, has been directed by a vision to make her way from Antioch to England. The king weds her gaily, and the two dwell together happily for fifteen years. They have two sons, Richard and John, and a daughter. The queen's custom is always to retire from church before the mass. A malicious earl comments on this fact to the king, and urges him to detain her once by force. This being attempted, she takes John and her daughter by the hand, and "out of the roof she gan her dight," openly before them all. John, however, falls from the air and breaks his thigh; but she and her daughter flee away, and are never again seen. The king in sorrow laments his loss until he dies, when Richard in his fifteenth year is proclaimed king.

The above account of Richard's parentage reminds us of that of Alexander and Arthur, but most strikingly of that of Richard's fellow Crusader, the famous Godefroy de Bouillon, who was reputed to be descended from a swan-maiden. The familiar story of the *Chevalier au Cygne* appears in part in an alliterative English poem of the fourteenth century. Later the whole was printed in the prose redaction entitled *Helyas, Knight of the*

Swan. The English romance of *Partenay* preserves the tale of Mélusine in the form prepared by the Poitevin La Couldrette about 1400 for the Dukes of Parthenay, being intended to exalt the house of Lusignan. The octosyllabic couplets of the French are turned in the English into seven-line stanzas. This version differs from the fascinating account of Mélusine by Jean d'Arras (1387), which is found in English prose.

But the deeds of Godefroy de Bouillon were presented in an historical work which discarded the fabulous notion of him as another Lohengrin. *The Siege and Conquest of Jerusalem*, by William, Archbishop of Tyre (1175-1184), gives in the main reliable information on the First Crusade and the French establishments in the Holy Land. A French version of the Latin text was translated by Caxton and printed by him in 1481.

Godefroy, Tasso's hero, was elected the chief personage of the Crusades. By Caxton he was considered as the world's greatest hero since Arthur and Charlemagne. With these two champions of Christianity he was associated to form the group of the three most valiant of their faith, to balance the three pagans, Hector, Alexander, and Cæsar, and the three Jews, Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabeus, who together were regarded as the *Nine Worthies* of the world. Each of these, of course, had different personal traits and a different history, but in their portrayal in the Middle Ages the lines of distinction became gradually obscured. One and all the characters of romance were mediævalised alike in the image of the chivalric ideal—that composite conception in the forming of which each had had a share. In the interesting fourteenth-century alliterative vision of the *Parliament of the Three Ages*, the writer takes them as his text for a homily on the vanity and transitoriness of human things.

The inclusion of three Israelites among the Worthies is significant, for it shows how the characters of Scripture were viewed in the Middle Ages, how all heroes were regarded as much the same. The stories of the Old Testament and Apocrypha were popular like secular narratives, and the wonders of the Bible,

the truth of which no one dared question, served to dispel any doubts that sceptics might have as to the achievements of modern men. If Joshua could make the sun stand still, why not Charlemagne? If David could slay the huge Goliath, "unmesurable of lengthe," why not Arthur the giant of Mont St. Michel or the Demon Cat of Lausanne? If Judas Maccabeus could conquer hostile hosts against enormous odds, why not Godefroy de Bouillon?

To these Nine Worthies, it is important to note, the Scotch of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were disposed to add another: Robert Bruce, the hero of Bannockburn, corresponding to the constable of France, Bertrand du Guesclin (1313-80), who likewise distinguished himself in campaigns against the English, and was celebrated by the French as a Tenth Worthy. In a Scottish *Ballad of the Nine Nobles*, after writing one stanza on each of the nine usually grouped together, the author concludes:

> Robert the Bruce through hard fighting,
> With few vanquished the mighty King
> Of England, Edward, twice in fight,
> That occupied his realm but (without) right;
> And sometimes was set so hard
> And had not six to him toward.
> The good men that these ballads read
> Deem who doughtiest was in deed.

Evidently there was good reason for thus associating Bruce with the representative heroes of mediæval story; for in his delineation by John Barbour, the only important Scottish writer of Chaucer's time, the colours of romance were freely employed. Barbour's famous poem is a very interesting illustration of the way in which the romantic method could be applied to the treatment of an historical theme.

> Stories to read are delitabell
> Suppose that they be nought but fable,
> Then should stories that soothfast were,
> And they were said in good manner,
> Have double plesance in hearing.

So Barbour begins; and throughout he shows his familiarity with the "delitabell" tales that we have here discussed. He made prominent those features in Bruce's career in which he might be thought to resemble the long celebrated worthies of the world, and enforced by definite comparison the likeness of his exploits to theirs. In picturing Bruce he exalted the best mediæval principles of character and conduct: loyalty, bravery, and fortitude, generosity, gentleness, and respect for women—in sum, chivalrous nobility.

Barbour's work will receive fuller treatment later. Here it need only be emphasised as an example of the way in which romance, by influencing the presentation of historical persons, helped to determine national characteristics. The Scotch would not have conceived Robert Bruce, or, we may add, William Wallace, their chief embodiments of patriotic impulse, as they have done for six centuries past, had not the founders of their literary renown been steeped in mediæval lore.

Late in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it may finally be said, romances were still greatly favoured, as is attested by the successful publication of such works as *Clariodus*, *Valentine and Orson*, *Arthur of Little Britain*, *The Three Kings' Sons*, *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'Amour*, and *Paris and Vienne* "the which suffered many adversities because of their true love ere they could enjoy the effect thereof of each other." These, and others like them, are of a mediæval type, but they took form under influences that first became potent in England during the Renaissance. In the reign of James I., one Richard Johnson wrote a fantastic narrative of the *Seven Champions of Christendom*: St. George of England, St. Denis of France, St. James of Spain, St. Anthony of Italy, St. Andrew of Scotland, St. Patrick of Ireland, St. David of Wales—and their sons—which has been described as "all the lies of Christendom in one lie." Richard Johnson also wrote *The History of Tom à Lincoln, the Red Rose Knight*; and of the same period are the popular prose tales, *George à Green Pindar of Wakefield*, *Thomas à Reading*, *Dr.*

Faustus, *Friar Rush*, etc., which Thoms, their editor, calls the "Waverley Novels of the olden time." James I. of Scotland is said by a contemporary to have spent the night previous to his assassination "yn redying of romans, yn syngyng and pipyng, yn harpyng, and yn other honest solaces of grete plesance and disport."

It is particularly the reading of romances that has led modern men of letters to depict the Middle Ages in very roseate colours. Burke must have been stimulated by a romantic conception of the period when he wrote the following familiar words:

"The age of chivalry is gone—Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defense of nations, the muse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage while it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself loses half its evil by losing all its grossness."

CHAPTER VI

TALES

THE most delightful and abiding literature of the Middle Ages is narrative. Didactic and moral treatises have for us mainly the interest of curiosity, histories are ill-conceived and inexact, fine lyrics are rare, the drama is in its swaddling-clothes; but everywhere the story reigns. It may be popular ballad or *chanson de geste*, chivalrous lay or romance, legends of "Cupid's Saints" or of worthies of the Church, secular or religious allegory, fabliau or fable—everywhere, not only in separate form, but in an infinitude of combinations, the story appears holding an unquestioned sway.

We have studied in detail the productions termed romance, extended stories of adventure and love, of feudalism and chivalry. We now turn to the other types of narrative that found literary embodiment in the mediæval period, and shall try to discover what was their nature, where they originated, how they were perpetuated, and in what mould they were made. Final results in these inquiries are too much to expect. From time immemorial people everywhere have told tales, and no continent or race has had the exclusive power to produce them. The more we know of the matter, the more we are amazed at the peregrinations of popular saga. We are baffled by the uniformity of men's conceptions. In treating oral tradition, complete knowledge of what has happened is impossible to obtain.

Oriental Tales

It appears certain, however, that many tales popular in the West originated in the East. Three at least of the Canterbury Tales are Oriental in character: the Pardoner's account of the three rioters directed by Death to a hidden supply of gold, in the endeavour to gain which each loses his life (compare Kipling's tale of *The King's Ankus*); the Merchant's pear-tree story; and that of the Manciple, concerning Phœbus and the speaking crow. In no case is the direct source evident.

Dame Sirith is an Oriental tale, which was put into English verse before the death of Henry III. It relates how, while a merchant is absent at the fair in Boston, his wife rejects the advances of a clerk, but is later brought to yield to her lover by the wiles of a female Pandar called Sirith, who makes her victim fear transformation into a dog—a situation that indicates at bottom the Indian belief in metempsychosis. The story is told in a clever, jovial manner, with much realism and piquancy, in a style almost worthy of Chaucer, yet a century before his time.

Similar in character is Adam Cobsam's entertaining tale of *The Wright's Chaste Wife* (fifteenth century), which narrates how three associates, a lord, his steward, and the proctor of the parish church, try to win the love of the Wright's wife, but are trapped by her into a cellar and made to spin flax to get food, until they are finally freed under humiliating circumstances. The Wright wore a garland of roses which would remain fresh as long as his wife was chaste. It was to test the virtue of this talisman that each of the three suitors tried to bribe the lady to his desires. This tale in one or other feature of the chastity-test and the gulled lovers has many parallels: one is reminded in the first part of the magic horn of Caradoc in the ballad-fabliau of the *Mantle-Made-Amiss*, and the girdle of Florimel in Spenser; in the second, not only of many Eastern tales (one in *The Arabian Nights*), but also of the *Decameron* (ix. 1), Lydgate's *Lady Prioress and her*

Three Wooers, the French fabliau *Constant du Hamel*, and the old tale of *The Friar Well-Fitted.*

In *Sir Amadace* we have an admirable legendary tale embodying the world-wide belief in "the thankful dead." It turns on the law (that Herodotus tells us existed among the Egyptians) by which a creditor might deny his debtor the rights of decent burial. Emphasis is laid upon the virtue of fulfilling troth plighted, in a way that recalls the Franklin's Tale.

It is interesting to observe that the story of *Dame Sirith* was transformed by a contemporary into an "interlude," *De Clerico et Puella*, fragmentarily preserved. A parallel to the tale was put into a German *fastnachtspiel* by Hans Sachs. The themes of *The Wright's Chaste Wife* and *Sir Amadace* appeared later in Massinger's *Picture* and *Fatal Dowry.*

Sometimes tales of shrewdness and wit took on the guise of romance. In *Sir Cleges*, a short poem of the fourteenth century, the events are placed in the reign of King Uter, though the hero is very unlike Crestien's of the same name, or any British knight.

While the hero is kneeling under a cherry tree in his garden at Christmas-time, having abated his misery by humble prayer, his head catches a bough on which he discovers delicious fruit. Greatly astonished, he bears some to his wife, Dame Clarys, and at her suggestion takes a basket the next day to the king at Cardiff. Because of his poor array, he is unable to approach the king, until he promises to porter, usher, and steward each in turn a third of the present he expects. Recognising, however, that all is disposed of in advance, he takes a witty way of accomplishing revenge. When the delighted Uter asks him to name his own reward, he asks for twelve strokes ; and these he then dispenses to the grasping steward and his fellows, much to the merriment of the court.

On a French prose romance was based the long-winded *Tale of Beryn*, written in English early in the fifteenth century by an anonymous author, who, like Lydgate, foolishly tried to continue the Canterbury Tales. He explains in a prologue how the pilgrims occupied themselves at Canterbury, and then represents

the merchant as telling the tale before us as the first on the return journey.

The main incidents picture the wilful, perverse youth, Beryn, in Falsetown, a prey to sharpers, only extricating himself from serious trouble by the aid of a helpful cripple, who turns the table on his evil persecutors by countercharges of wit. Beryn, for example, loses a game of chess to a burgess, and as a result has the alternative of drinking all the salt water in the sea or of forfeiting his ships. The cripple, appearing in his defence at the prosecution, agrees that Beryn shall drink the salt water, but first requires that all the fresh water running into the sea be separated from it. Again he confounds another rascal who has induced Beryn to exchange his five ships for five loads of what he can find in a certain house. The house appears empty when they enter, but the cripple lets loose two butterflies in it, and secures heavy damages because the prosecutor cannot secure five ship-loads of these to justify the bargain.

Fabliaux

Occasionally of Oriental origin are the merry tales in verse known as "fabliaux," which were immensely popular in the Middle Ages. Arising in France about the middle of the twelfth century, they enjoyed particular favour in the thirteenth, and maintained themselves for a good while after. They were never taken very seriously as works of literature. The writers, almost all of whom are unknown, were not bent on exalting themselves in the eyes of posterity. Though only a few fabliaux are extant in English verse, it is certain that many were composed. This was not the sort of production to be carefully transcribed; it did not need writing to be remembered.

The fabliaux offer a striking contrast to legends and romances. They are not chivalric and courtly, but *bourgeois* and rough; they picture the real and practical, not the ideal or sentimental; their primary object is to evoke laughter, to stimulate jovial intercourse at close range; they are not necessarily vile, but they do not inculcate ethics; their satire is amiable, their moral waggish. They are, moreover, short and to the point; no detailed

descriptions or long-drawn-out discussions ever disturb the rapid advance of the story: the reader finds himself in the middle of things and hears no more than enough. Characteristic, furthermore, is their attitude towards women. The fair lady heroines of romance are supercilious, haughty, cruel, when they wish, but valiant warriors delight to serve them; they are all endowed with virtue and charm; their worship is an established and honourable cult. In the fabliaux, on the contrary, women are universally pictured as deceivers, sure to be unfaithful to their husbands if given a chance, ill-tempered, vain, nagging, thorns in the side of submissive men—a necessary evil. The cynic replaces the devotee. Guillaume de Lorris yields to Jean de Meung.

If one would reconstruct mediæval society accurately, if one would learn of the actual surroundings and occupations of the majority of the people, the fabliaux deserve at least as careful consideration as any other type of mediæval literature. Chaucer felt obliged to relate some of them to portray suitably certain classes of his time. Then in the real world were as marked contrasts as appear in his tales. The vulgarly coarse elbowed the over-refined, materialists moved with mystics, the lewd bowed to the learned, the subservient churl scraped before a haughty lord. The juxtaposition of the "noble story" of Palamon and Arcite with the vulgar anecdotes of the Miller and the Reeve, the tale of the Prioress with that of the Shipman, the Manciple's with the Parson's, pictured the strange associations of ordinary life; and their tales the unlike predilection of unlike people. Say what one will of the churlishness or obscenity of the fabliaux that Chaucer chose to repeat, the poet makes clear that they pleased the pilgrims. Of the Miller's ribald tale, he remarks:

> Diverse folk diversely they seyde;
> But for the moste part, they loughe and pleyde,
> Ne at this tale I saugh no man him greve,—

save only the Reeve, who resented it because the joke was on

a carpenter, a man of his own trade. When, moreover, he retorted in kind ("and harlotrye they tolden bothe two"), he gave such satisfaction that the cook "for joy . . . clawed him on the back."

The earliest extant English fabliau (if such it may be called) is a short poem of the thirteenth century entitled *The Land of Cokaygne*, which anticipates Chaucer in the good-humoured, if somewhat coarse, satire one finds in the Summoner's Tale. Here Cokaygne is represented as the monk's Utopia, a land for gluttons and lechers, contrasting with the dull and monotonous Paradise. The author probably borrowed his idea from a French description of the place, though the conception of an elysium as a land of idleness dates from antiquity and is found everywhere. It may be that he was stimulated to his production by personal observations in familiar monasteries: certain scenes realistically portrayed suggest definite allusion to local disorders. The poem doubtless stirred many to laughter, without, we fear, leading them to mend their ways.

Preserved as early as in the Auchinleck MS. (1330-40) is the *Pennyworth of Wit, or How a Merchant did his Wife Betray*, which served to show how a man can be "penny wise and pound foolish."

A merchant who has neglected his wife for a fascinating mistress, is given by the former a penny with which to purchase wit abroad. For this he gets advice how to test his lemman's devotion, in contrast to his wife's. To the former he comes in apparent distress, and is cast out; while the latter takes pains to comfort him. He recovers the rich presents he has bestowed on the fair shrew, and transfers them to his faithful spouse, as a return for her penny. They live afterwards happily together.

Of Chaucer's Reeve's Tale we have another English version, *The Miller of Abyngdon* (in tail-rhyme strophes), extant also in two Old French, two German, and one Latin form, as well as in the *Decameron* (ix. 6). Like nearly all the English fabliaux, Chaucer's poem is derived from a French source. La Fontaine drew his version from Boccaccio.

Other "merry jests" in English verse are *The Friar and the Boy*: how the latter, provided with a magic pipe, made a friar dance ludicrously on conspicuous occasions, and how his step-mother also suffered to her shame; *How a Sergeant would learn to be a Friar*, but got a beating for his deceit; *Dan Hugh Monk of Leicester*, how he was four times slain and once hanged; *How the Plowman learned his Paternoster*, being required to remember in right order the names of forty poor folk, who one after another applied for corn: the last was called Amen; the *Tale of the Basin*, how the priest Sir John and his paramour got caught in the act of love-making: the bowl was enchanted so that any hand that touched it stuck fast; soon it was surrounded by various folk who could not get free until the charm was reversed—in one form or another a very widespread and amusing narrative.

Perhaps with the idea of parodying chivalric poems, or of burlesquing knightly practices, were written in the fifteenth century *The Tournament of Totenham*, *The Felon Son and the Friars of Richmond*, and *The Hunting of the Hare*. In the last a whole community of common people are represented on a ridiculous hunt, which ends with rough dispute.

The fabliaux were in verse, but they were destined to be turned into prose, and amalgamated with stories of the same character to form "jest-books," which were very popular in Shakspere's time. It was doubtless by imitation of the *Decameron* that an anonymous writer compiled the book of *A Hundred Merry Tales*, with which the names of John Heywood and Sir Thomas More have been connected. Certainly Heywood borrowed much from like jovial narratives, whether in the form of fabliaux or of the farces into which they sometimes developed.

Pious Tales

Attention may next be called to the large group of pious tales, *contes dévots*, similar in scope and presentation to the fabliaux, but differently inspired—tales religious in nature, written to edify, to

encourage and support in righteous living—the work of monks or clerks. These tales relied on credulity; they fostered superstition; they are sometimes puerile, absurd, even gross; but the writers, there can be no doubt, were in general sincere and zealous for good. Quite as much as any other body of narrative literature, they may be treated as genuine social records, reflecting actual conditions in the different ages of their composition and revision. Their value in the age of their writing is not to be measured by their purely literary excellence, or by the present power of the religious ideas they once conveyed.

Most numerous are the so-called *Miracles of Our Lady*. Only a few are extant in English in comparison with the large numbers once written. In the Vernon MS. but nine are preserved of a collection of forty-two; Barbour's sixty-six are all gone. Of those in the former group the most conspicuous perhaps are some that were calculated to stir up enmity against the Jews. One of these tells how a Jew put his son into a burning oven because he communed with Christian children at Easter, and how the brands were as a bed of flowers to him by the care of the Virgin. Another is of the young scholar who so exasperated certain Jews by his singing of *Alma Redemptoris Mater* that they murdered him and concealed his body, but to their own shame; for the crime was discovered and the boy miraculously restored—a tale, it will be remembered, that Chaucer repeats with tenderness.

There was no limit to the solicitude of the Virgin for those who served her. Even the greatest sinners might hope for her help, if they did not forget their Ave Marias. For this reason she saved a thief who had been three days hanged, an incontinent monk after he had been drowned, and other distressed penitents in serious peril.

A Good Knight and his Jealous Wife tells how the former admitted to his lady that he loved another (meaning the Virgin) more than her, and how the wife's jealousy was raised by the devil so that she slew herself and her children. But the knight's devotion to the Virgin led to the restoration of all to life; the devils' exultation was turned to grief when they were roundly

scourged by the angels. This the poem teaches: "There shall no man sikerly do aught for our dear lady, but he shall have his meed." The *Knight and his Wife* also reveals the Virgin opposing the wiles of the devil, rescuing a culprit in spiritual peril. The knight in extreme poverty pledges his wife to Satan in return for large gifts. When, unwitting of harm, she is conducted to the tryst, she insists on entering a chapel to pray, and there falls asleep before the altar. Shortly after she seems to reappear and the knight rides on to the meeting. But the devil recognises that the lady in his presence is the Virgin and makes off in angry dismay. Mary gives the man wholesome advice, which he afterwards follows. They find the lady still asleep on their return, unaware of what has happened in her behalf. In various other semblances (as a midwife, for example) Mary was thought to appear, to give solace or circumvent the shape-shifting fiend.

To inculcate the value of penance, many pious tales are told. *The Hermit and the Outlaw* gives an account of an "errant thief" who haunted the wild wood-shaws, and how he and his pious brother were diversely brought to the bliss of paradise.

One Good Friday the outlaw sees various penitents going barefoot to church, and joins their company. Moved by the vicar's sermon, he inquires what he shall do to be saved. One after another, however, he rejects the hard penances suggested, but at last accepts what he thinks an easy one. The vicar, guided by heaven, asks him what he hates most, and the outlaw replies "to drink water," whereupon the holy man agrees to absolve him if he goes without water for a day. The outlaw departs merrily, but is soon overcome by a terrible thirst. The devil in the disguise of winsome wenches several times offers him to drink, but he keeps his vow. Finally, in despair, he cuts a vein to quench his thirst, and bleeds to death. Angels then appear with song and shout and carry his soul to heaven. The hermit sees the happy throng as they pass his abode, and marvels exceedingly. If this, he murmurs, is the way to get to heaven, he will abandon his asceticism and be an outlaw too. But an angel reproves him sternly, and shows him that he must persevere as he has begun. In the end he shares his brother's bliss.

References to the pestilence in England show that this interesting poem (in tail-rhyme strophes) was written in the third quarter of the fourteenth century. It is a combination of two tales, both then current as *exempla*. The teaching is evidently that "there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance."

The first part is plainly akin to the charming Old French story of the *Chevalier au Barizel*, concerning another "easy penance."

A lord, having refused all other suggestions of the priest to whom he comes on a Good Friday in a haughty mood, at last undertakes for shrift to fill a bucket with water at a brook near the hermit's refuge. When he finds that no water will go into the bucket there, he vows not to rest until it is filled. For a year he wanders restlessly, but to no avail. The bucket still remains empty, when the next Good Friday he humbly seeks the hermit again. The good man shows him the folly of his pride. And the first tear of true repentance that the knight lets fall fills the bucket to overflowing. Angels carry his soul to heaven the same day.

On the other hand, the merit of sincere repentance as a means of blotting out even the blackest guilt is emphasised to our distaste and disapproval in the *Tale of the Incestuous Daughter*, who, after a long succession of horrible crimes, is redeemed just before death. Apparently it was not thought well to give such penitents a chance to err again.

The virtue of good deeds, the advantage of supporting the Church, the efficacy of masses for the departed, are all illustrated by the tale of *The Child of Bristow*, which narrates how a covetous father, who on earth did ill and neglected his religious duties, was saved from the pains of hell by the self-sacrifice of his son, who restored his sire's ill-gotten gains to those he had injured and said trentals of masses for his soul. The son's piety gained him unexpected reward.

In this connection, though it might also be grouped with the didactic dialogues or visions, may be mentioned the story of *The Ghost of Guy*, an English poem of the second quarter of the fourteenth century, drawn from the Latin. It is a miracle of a great French burgess whose spirit appeared shortly after his death to the prior, and answered his numerous questions concerning the hereafter, especially the state of purgatory. Here also the virtue of masses for the dead is shown by the spirit's declaration of relief thereby.

Grotesqueness is sometimes the main characteristic of these

contes dévots. *The Smith and his Dame*, for example, could surely have had no attraction for the refined, though its comic situations may have made it popular among the common folk.

It relates how the Lord, to subdue the pride of a boastful Smith, shows His own superior power by forging the Smith's hideous old mother-in-law into a beautiful woman, and how the Smith tries to do the same for his wife. When, despite her struggles (more vehement than those of Noah's wife in the mystery), her spouse forces her into the fire and has made her unrecognisable by his hammering, she is restored to life and fairness by the Lord, to whom the Smith must needs appeal in humility.

The preservation of one pious tale in the Auchinleck MS. shows how early they were put into English, but most of the class are extant only in late forms. At the Reformation they were frowned out of repute. Nevertheless, their vogue had been immense; their influence evades calculation. If one would understand the mystery-plays fully, one should study along with them the ideas, style, and provenience of these popular tales.

Beast-Fables, Beast-Epics, and Bestiaries

Among all savage folk beast-tales abound. Aboriginal man, disregarding the essential differences between himself and what we call lower animals, ascribed to them his own nature, and told tales in which beasts appeared with sentiments and qualities like his own. In accord with the animistic philosophy of the uncivilised, stories of beasts, whether in origin mythical or totemistic, are found much alike in all parts of the world. These tales, however, first concern the student of literature when they are told with a purpose and moralised into fables. Beast-fables have had a long and important history. Among the earliest productions of the class were those of the Indians and Greeks. The chief Indian collections are known as the *Jatakas*, or Buddhist Birth Tales, composed about 400 B.C., though not put into their present form till as late perhaps as 500 A.D. Many of these were used in the famous *Fables of Bidpai*, and are to be found likewise in the

Panchatantra, a Buddhistic book of instruction for noble youth. Indian fables were perpetuated by the Greeks and added to from their own independent supply. The Greek collection most familiar to us is that which goes under the name of Æsop, a personage of whom nothing exact is known. Many, however, of the fables now known as Æsop's are merely paraphrases of the Greek mythiambi of the third-century Roman Babrius, known to the West through the incomplete Latin translation of Avianus (*c.* 380).

The most noteworthy Latin collection, also based on one in Greek, was that of Phædrus, many of whose fables circulated in the West in a redaction which bore the name of *Romulus*, the work purporting to have been prepared by an emperor of that name for the instruction of his son. It did not derive from Æsop, as it claimed, but from Phædrus, with whose fables were combined others that have a mediæval stamp. This Latin prose collection appears to have taken shape first in England in the eleventh century, and was apparently soon translated into the vernacular. One form of the English translation was utilised by Marie de France as the basis of her book of over a hundred fables, known as the *Ysopet*. The composition of this English source was attributed to King Alfred, but evidently only to heighten its authority. Various other *Ysopets* were composed in French later, both in England and on the Continent, as well as other versions of the *Romulus* in Latin. About 1180 the English Cistercian Odo of Sheriton (Wales?) gathered from various sources, and moralised, a Latin prose collection, which was much used by his countrymen.

No Middle English book of fables appeared, until Lydgate, possibly while a youth at Oxford, began one on the model of that of Marie de France. The seven fables he tells, and their prologue, together occupy about 900 lines, and are written in the Troilus stanza. Beside Marie's, Lydgate may have known a Latin version, and he indulged himself somewhat in learned allusion and digression. Meanwhile, however, a few stray fables had

become conspicuous in English poems, as, for example, that of "belling the cat," which Langland allegorised so effectively in 1377, and that of "The Fox and the Fisher" in Barbour's *Bruce*. Into example-books and other didactic works a goodly number likewise found their way. A fable—that of the bird in borrowed plumage—lies at the basis of Holland's *Buke of the Howlate* (1451). In Scotland, by far the most artistic fables extant are the thirteen of Henryson (1470-80), which reveal considerable independence and power of poetic treatment. Henryson appears to have used the Latin verse collection that was printed by Wynkyn de Worde, as *Esopi Fabulae*, in 1504. Caxton's book of fables (1484) is based on a French translation of the *Aesopus* of the German Steinhöwel, collected and translated by him about 1480. Steinhöwel's collection comes from several sources, a large part from Romulus and Avianus, and a portion from the Greek text, which had recently been printed in Italy. It was reserved for La Fontaine (1621-95) to give fables an abiding place in the literature of the world. His example was followed in England by Gay (1685-1732), but with less success.

A special creation of the Middle Ages was what is known as the beast-epic, wherein we see animals typifying human beings, and behaving like them. Little by little separate allegorised tales were brought together to form the *Romance of Reynard the Fox*, a satirical picture of society as viewed by the middle classes, a very witty parody on the conventions and complications of ordinary life.

Originating perhaps as a semi-didactic work in Flanders, taking literary shape in Latin works of the twelfth century, it became, about 1180, a sort of popular epic in Germany, and in France a romance with many so-called "branches." On the basis of a French version, a Fleming named Willem, about the middle of the thirteenth century, composed a very striking poem, the *Roman van den Vos Reinarde*, which was afterwards remodelled and amplified in different redactions, and finally appeared in Low German prose towards the close of the fifteenth century. Caxton

translated and printed one of the late prose versions in 1481. Goethe's *Reinecke Fuchs* is the most famous modern embodiment of the theme.

The *Roman de Renart* is certainly a captivating work, full of good-humoured fun and sly suggestion. Men's foibles are laid bare in the actions of animals, with extraordinary keenness of perception and not over-serious satire. Here we have the mediæval *bourgeoisie* at its best, shrewd but amiable, sensible but merry, conscious of its growing power and awakened to independent sentiment, but not disposed to sneer. Light-heartedly the common people of France bore the ills of life, and laughed away discomfort. They forgot their own afflictions while applauding wit.

Reynard is the centre of the little epic. His name is derived from the German Reinhardt, meaning "strong in counsel," and he justifies it by his conduct. His cunning is surpassing, his audacity superb. Associated with him are other animals with equally characteristic traits, all individualised by name and description, and yet all representative of types. Even now, not only Reynard, but also Chauntecleer and Bruin, will call up definite images to most readers. The framework of the stories, the costuming and the like, are imitations of serious romance. The personages indulge in mock-heroics, and voice the sober sentiments of men.

The French in England, being mostly of the upper classes, favoured the aristocratic romances, and did much to extend their sway; but, so far as we can tell, they did not participate in the production of the *Romance of Reynard.* And the Saxon middle classes for the most part either aped the taste of the nobility or were satisfied with rude accounts of fight and vulgar jests. They lacked the delicate, insinuating, restrained wit of the Gaul across the Channel. At *their* best they evoked the ballads of Robin Hood.

Odo of Sheriton shows acquaintance with the Reynard epic: his animals are called Isengrim, Reynard, Teburgus (Tib the Cat),

etc. ; but with the exception of Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale, only one section of the Romance, it seems, was put into English—that, however, very skilfully, in a poem entitled *The Fox and the Wolf*. The anonymous author does not treat his material with the independence of his great successor, but clearly and with strong effect.

One day Reynard emerges from the wood very hungry. "Him were liefer meet one hen than half a hundred women," and he hopes to gratify his taste. Entering an enclosure, he sees a cock seated on a perch with his hens beside him. He has an amusing discussion with Chauntecleer, but is unable to persuade him to descend. Being sore athirst, he then makes his way to a well, where are two buckets, so arranged that when one goes down the other goes up. He leaps into one to get a drink, and down it moves. All his thirst vanishes ; the water seems to him to stink. He sees he is caught, and begins to weep. Then draws near his neighbour, the wolf Sigrim, also famished. He hears Reynard's cries, and inquires the cause of his condition. The witty fox declares that he is enjoying the bliss of Paradise—no pain, no care, no work, no hunger, or other woe. In laughter, the wolf inquires whether his friend is dead ; only three days ago he dined at his house. "No," says the fox, "but I have abandoned the sorrowful world, and come down here where all is joy, and where there is plenty to eat." This stirs the wolf, who begs to be allowed to join him. "Well," replies Reynard, "were you well shriven, and determined to live a pure life, I would pray that you might be permitted to come hither." The wolf recounts his sins to the fox, who acts as confessor, even the sin he has committed against the latter in cherishing towards him ill-will because he has seen him too familiar with his wife. The fox pardons him, and bids him, if he would have the bliss of heaven, enter the other bucket. Down goes the wolf, up goes the fox. They meet on the way. Reynard bids his neighbour farewell ; he is glad he has come to a clean life ; he will have masses said for his soul. Poor Sigrim finds nothing to eat. "Frogs had kneaded his dough." His hunger presses, and he curses the fox. But the latter pays no attention, and makes off in glee. The friars, proprietors of the place, arise to sing matins. The chief steward goes out to the well for water, draws up the bucket, sees the grim wolf within, takes him for the devil, and sounds an alarm.

Well and wroth he was y-swung,
With staves and spears he was y-stung ;
The fox bikerd him, mid y-wis,
For he ne found no kind of bliss,
Nor of dints forgiveness.

In the author of this poem we have a worthy predecessor of Chaucer, who also found in some epic story of the Reynard cycle material for the sparkling tale of the Nun's Priest. The story is too familiar to need repetition here. As witnesses to an epic source have been cited the dream, the proper names of Chauntecleer and Pertelote, the specific description of the proprietress of the cock, and of the yard with its fence or hedge, the dialogue between the cock and the hen after the dream, and the lament of the hens. These are not to be found in the popular beast-fable on which it was long thought to be directly founded. But only about one-third of the tale is drawn from epic fable tradition. The humour that dazzles and delights us throughout is Chaucer's own. That in his original there was a tendency towards what is known as the "anthropomorphic" style, we may well believe. But the poet's developments are happy in the extreme. He manages to invest his characters with strange dignity, and to make the situation bewilderingly real and dramatic. No feeling of incongruity disturbs our enjoyment of the situation. Yet Pertelote is as "difficult" as the supercilious ladies of romance, equally charming and fair. Likewise Chauntecleer is as gay and fresh as a squire, as gallant and flattering as a troubadour. And withal of insinuating wit. In Chaucer's hands the Reynard epic might have attained its finest form had he chosen to treat it as a whole; for in his temper were the qualities of those who first endowed it with real life.

From early times books on the fabulous natures and qualities of animals, provided with moral or mystical interpretation, were familiar in England. They are all based on a religious document, the so-called *Physiologus*, that arose among the Christians of Alexandria, and soon became popular far and wide. First current in Greek, it was later turned into Latin, and thence into the vernaculars of the West. The oldest version in a Germanic language is the Anglo-Saxon poem on *The Panther and the Whale* (perhaps it told also of the Partridge), a work of considerable poetic merit. Far less important from a literary point of view

are the *Bestiaire* of the Anglo-Norman Philippe de Thaün, written for Queen Adelaide shortly after 1121, and that of the Norman Guillaume le Clerc, which appeared after 1210. The Middle English *Bestiary* is an anonymous work of the early part of the thirteenth century, comprising some 800 lines in varying metre. It is based in the main on a Latin *Physiologus*, by one Theobald, but its style is much less dry and dull. In addition to the original twelve sections on the lion, eagle, adder, ant, hart, fox, spider, whale, mermaid, elephant, turtle, panther, it has another (probably taken from Alexander Neckham's *De Naturis Rerum*) on the culver, or dove, whose seven properties are interpreted morally.

To illustrate the nature of the book, we may take the passages on the lion and the elephant:

The lion stands on a hill, and if he hear a man hunt, or by his nose-smell scent his approach, by whatever way he descends to the dale he fills all his footsteps after him, draws dust with his tail wherever he steps, either dust or dew, so that he (the hunter) cannot find him. Another "nature" he has, when he is born: the lion lies still and stirs not from sleep till the sun has shone about him thrice; then his father rouses him with his roaring. The third custom the lion hath, when he lies to sleep, he is said never to close the lids of his eyes.

Signification: Well high is that hill that is the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord is the lion who liveth thereabove. Yet when it pleased Him to alight here on earth, the devil might never know though he hunted Him secretly how He came down, nor how He dwelt in that mild maiden, Mary by name, who bore Him to the profit of men. When our Lord was dead and buried, as His will was, He lay still in a stone till the third day. His Father aided Him, so that He rose then from the dead to keep us alive. According to His pleasure, He watches as a shepherd for his flock. He is shepherd; we are sheep. He will shield us if we obey His word, so that we go nowhere astray.

Elephants live in India, like great mountains in body. They go together in the jungle like sheep coming out of the fold. . . . They have no joints to get up with. How this animal rests, when he walks far—hearken, how it tells here; for he is all unwieldly. Truly, he seeks a strong and steadfast tree, and leans against it confidently, when he is weary of walking. The hunter, having noticed where his best resort is, to do his will, saws this tree, and underprops it as best he can, conceals his act well, that the elephant is

not aware of it when he returns. He himself sits alone, and watches whether his trick shall avail him aught. Then comes this unwieldly elephant, and leans upon his side, sleeps by the tree in the shadow, and so both fall together. If no man is there when he falls, he roars and calls for help, roars ruefully in his manner, hoping to get help to rise. Then comes an animal there, hopes to cause him to stand up, strives and struggles with all his might; but he can accomplish it no whit. He can do then nothing else than roar with his brother. Many and mickle come running there, strive to raise him; but for all their help he may not get up. Then they roar all with one roar like the blast of a horn, or the sound of a bell. For their mickle roaring, a youngling comes running, bends quickly to him, puts his snout under him, and with the help of them all he raises the elephant erect—who thus escapes this hunter's trap, in the wise that I have described.

Signification: Thus fell Adam through a tree—our first father. That we feel. Moses wished to raise him; no one might accomplish it. After Moses, all the prophets; no one might raise him where he stood before, to have the good kingdom of heaven. They sighed and sorrowed, and were in thought how they might help him up. They all roared with one voice, all on high to heaven. For their care and their calling, Christ, the king of heaven, came to them, became man here, and thus was little, suffered death in our manhood, and thus He went under Adam, raised him up, and mankind, that had fallen to dark hell.

"Glosinge is a glorious thing, certeyn," we can but remark. Yet, absurd as most of the *Physiologus* undoubtedly is, its immense influence on all sorts of writing, as well as on symbolic sculpture and painting, makes it a book worth careful consideration. The notions that it contains were perpetuated in much secular and religious allegory, particularly of the thirteenth century.

Collections

A desire clearly manifest in the Middle Ages was to have all knowledge and all material of uplifting import and literary entertainment accessible in compact form. It did not remain for us in modern times to invent manuals, compendiums, corpuses, books of selections, dictionaries of mythology and biography, and encyclopedias. All these existed in abundance centuries before printing was discovered.

We remember how in very early times ecclesiastics made collections of sermons, lives of the Church fathers and of the saints, martyrologies and legendaries, as well as various "sums" of theological and ethical teaching. We have seen how fables were gathered together, fabliaux united in jest-books, and pious tales zealously amassed. Now we must consider certain other collections of narrative and biography that were prepared with a more or less serious didactic purpose.

Among these, two classes should be kept distinct—one in which the different sections simply follow one another without intimate bonds of union, and another in which the transitions between them are marked in order to produce a general effect. On the one hand we have, to take illustrations only from Chaucer's works, the Monk's Tale and the *Legend of Good Women*, where accounts of famous personages are given separately in succession; and on the other, the whole body of the *Canterbury Tales*, where each is but part of a great whole, bound to what precedes and follows by skilfully constructed connecting-links. Both styles of composition long antedate Chaucer. The best examples of the simple collective system exist in Latin works and exhibit no particular talent of compilation. The most famous of the story-books that show skill in suggestive union originated in the East.

Of the former group the *Gesta Romanorum* may be taken as a type. When and where this important work originated are matters still unsettled. But the date of the collection cannot be far from the close of the thirteenth century; and for the idea an Englishman seems to deserve the credit. To be sure, the number of the stories and the make-up were greatly altered in Continental redactions, and these were the only ones to be printed in early times; but this was due to the fact that they were the most accessible to the printers. When thus imported into England they superseded the native redactions, which were insufficient by comparison.

The original purpose of the *Gesta Romanorum* was to provide for the clergy a supply of tales for homiletic instruction. At

first this object was never lost sight of. To every story a moral was attached, and this the compiler considered as very important. Such tales, then, were chosen as could suitably be allegorised. It must be said, however, that this was no great restriction; for the ingenious clerk could find a moral in any narrative, and even the lewdest story could be turned to account. One example, *The Tree that Bore Good Fruit*, will indicate sufficiently well how far-fetched the symbolism of the interpretation might be.

Valerius tells us that a man named Paletinus one day burst into tears, and, calling his son and his neighbours around him, said: "Alas! alas! I have now growing in my garden a fatal tree, on which my poor first wife hanged herself, then my second, and after that my third. Have I not therefore cause for wretchedness?" "Truly," said one, who was called Arrius, "I marvel that you should weep at such unusual good fortune! Give me, I pray you, two or three sprigs of that gentle tree, which I will divide with my neighbours, and thereby enable every man to indulge his spouse." Paletinus complied with his friend's request, and ever after found this tree the most productive part of his estate.

Application: My beloved, the tree is the cross of Christ. The man's three wives are pride, lust of the heart, and lust of the eyes, which ought to be thus suspended and destroyed. He who solicited a part of the tree is any good Christian.

This tale, told by Cicero in his *De Oratore*, was evidently of the sort that would justify its insertion in a book bearing the title *Gesta Romanorum*: at first perhaps the collection consisted largely, or exclusively, of such events as were said to have happened in Roman times. Later, however, material was added from every source, from secular and ecclesiastical traditions, from books of natural history, fables, and chronicles. Often the tales contrast markedly in spirit and tone, in localisation and age. This variety, however, preserved them from monotony, and made them a pleasant resource to men in any mood.

It was in the Latin form that the united stories of the *Gesta* were chiefly current. But in time they were turned into the vernacular, and thus made more widely familiar. We have three

manuscripts of an English translation that was probably made in the reign of Henry VI. Soon after 1510, Wynkyn de Worde published an edition containing forty-three stories; and in 1577 an Elizabethan hack-writer, Richard Robinson, made another, which was reprinted frequently, and passed into everybody's hands. That Shakspere knew the *Gesta* there can be little doubt. It included the stories of the Merchant of Venice, Lear, and Pericles. Indeed, many prominent English writers from Gower to Walpole made use of it, and on the Continent men as different in time and spirit as Boccaccio and Schiller.

Boccaccio, though famed now chiefly as the writer of the *Decameron*, won great repute among his contemporaries as the author of learned manuals, and among these were two, the *De Casibus Virorum et Feminarum Illustrium* and the *De Claris Mulieribus*, which stimulated Chaucer to the production of his two collections of independent narratives already mentioned, the Monk's Tale and the *Legend of Good Women*.

The monk declares that he has in his cell a book of a hundred "tragedies," which he implies were arranged in chronological order. Of these, however, he only gives seventeen, and according to no strict plan. He begins with Lucifer, Adam, Samson, Hercules, Nebuchadnezzar, and Belshazzar; but into the middle of the group, before Nero, he inserts brief accounts of Pedro of Spain, Pierre of Cyprus, Barnabo, and Ugolino, which told of very modern occurrences. Apparently these eleven stanzas (for all four tragedies occupy no more) formed a late insertion into a work that Chaucer had earlier begun but lacked incentive to continue. He humorously represents the Tale of the Monk as unfinished because the Knight, finding the uniform narration dull, interrupts the reciter in the interest of the fatigued company.

It should be observed that once again, when Chaucer's artistic sense caused him to abandon a work which did not commend itself to him after he had proceeded with it a short way, his disciple Lydgate, less sensitive and more plodding,

brought the whole to completion. Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* was also fashioned after Boccaccio's *De Casibus*; but he had it before him in a French version by one Laurent de Premierfait, an ecclesiastic of Troyes. The *Fall of Princes* is the best of Lydgate's longer works, and deservedly met with favour. The *Mirror for Magistrates*, by Sackville, Baldwin, and others, was a later series of "piteous tragedies," probably suggested by it.

In the *De Claris Mulieribus* Boccaccio gives succinct accounts in Latin prose of 105 illustrious women. Chaucer's plan in the *Legend of Good Women* agrees with that of the Italian writer in the general scheme of narrating the lives of many heroines, chiefly of antiquity, without connecting-links, but united by an introductory prologue. In both cases the work, undertaken, each author states, in a time of leisure, is dedicated unobtrusively to a queen, whom each had in mind to exalt in his last legend. Boccaccio actually did this; but Chaucer, not finishing his undertaking, failed to tell of Alcestis, whom he desired particularly to praise.

Neither in this work nor in the Monk's Tale does Chaucer derive all his material from Boccaccio's compilation; but he shows esteem for his "auctour Lollius" by imitating his plan. From another Latin production by Boccaccio, it may be added, the *De Genealogia Deorum Gentilium et Heroum*, a dictionary of mythology, Chaucer also gleaned information introduced in various places.

The number of learned compilations of this general kind from which English writers could and did draw is very large, so large that it is difficult to determine the exact source in any particular instance. Before the time of the Crusades the illustrative tales in sermons were usually of Christian origin, but later material was utilised of every provenience. When preaching to the laity became more and more common, especially after the establishment of the orders of friars, and sermons had to be made attractive to the uncultivated, the number of story-books intended

to help in their preparation became very great. Among the most significant are the *Exempla* of Jacques de Vitry († *c.* 1240), celebrated as a preacher of the Crusade against the Albigenses, and the *Liber de Septem Donis* of Étienne de Bourbon († *c.* 1261). The latter has a peculiar value from the fact that the author collected popular material at first hand, like Walter Map and Gervase of Tilbury, and bears witness to many popular superstitions and customs now dismissed. Of Latin sermon-books by Englishmen the most notable is the *Summa Predicantium* of John Bromyard of Hereford († 1418), which contains a very large number (about a thousand) of exempla in topical arrangement, drawn from almost every sort of book accessible to a man with a well-stored library at his command. Historical rather than fabulous anecdotes were favoured by Robert Holcot († 1349), like Bromyard of the Dominican order, and professor of theology at Oxford. From his book of commentaries, *Super Libros Sapientiae*, as we have seen, Chaucer appears to have derived some material for the tales of the Nun's Priest and Pardoner.

The use of such "sermones parati" appears to have been very detrimental to the style of mediæval preachers, whose sermons were often little more than a series of anecdotes. Dante complains of those who "go forth with jests and buffooneries to preach, and swell with pride if they can but raise a laugh." Gautier de Château-Thierry, a preacher of the thirteenth century, says of the sending of the disciples by John the Baptist to Christ: "audiebat verba oris eius, non opera regum, vel Renardi, vel fabulas." Wycliffe insists that when Christ bade His disciples go into all the world to preach, their message was to be the Gospel and not the story of Troy.

The example-books, indeed, exerted a pervasive influence on all sorts of mediæval writers. Even Chaucer could not resist the temptation to cite "ensamples" repeatedly in support of his views. It was well enough for him to indulge the Pardoner in this practice, for he thus the better illustrated the methods of the common sermoniser, who justified his habit of narrating "en-

samples many oon, of olde stories longe tyme agoon," by the reason, no doubt true, that

> Lewed people loven tales olde,
> Swich thinges can they wel reporte and holde.

But elsewhere he had no such good excuse. In the Franklin's Tale, for example, he disturbs the progress of the story to cite examples, to the extent of about a hundred lines, of ladies who preferred death to pollution. Even the cock Chauntecleer on his roost instructs fair Pertelote concerning the significance of dreams with "ensamples olde" for some one hundred and eighty lines. So prevalent, in fact, is the tendency to make every one, human or superhuman, man or beast, speak in parables, that it grows at last exasperating, and, like Troilus to stop Pandar's talk, one is sometimes prone to exclaim, even in Chaucer's presence, "Lat be thyne olde ensamples, I thee preye."

The Pardoner's harangue was a "moral tale," with many a digression and illustration, pointing out the sin and sorrowful consequence of "gluttony, luxury, and hazardry," blasphemy and avarice. Under these or similar headings the stories in many of the Latin example-books were grouped. There were also works in the English vernacular in which the same method was employed. One of the most noteworthy of these is a poem that we shall presently examine more minutely, the *Handlyng Synne*, of Robert of Brunne (1303), where a large number of stories of all sorts are introduced into a theological discourse on such stern topics as the Seven Deadly Sins, to enforce and spice the teaching. Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, one of the largest bodies of narrative verse in the English language, is in plan similar—a discourse on the Seven Deadly Sins and their antidotes. Here, however, the application is different: the sins are against the God of Love. Gower was familiar not only with Chaucer's *Legend*, but also with the *Roman de la Rose*, the second part of which contains a vast deal of learned lore.

In the *Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landri*, which that

worthy Frenchman prepared about 1371 for the instruction of his three motherless daughters, are inserted many examples, which the author had collected for him by two priests and two clerks. They are of all sorts, some it would seem hardly fit for the ears of young women, though speech was then more open and free than now. An English translation of this work, prepared in the reign of Henry VI. for some person of rank, is extant in an elegant manuscript. Caxton published another version in 1484. The knightly author states that he also wrote a similar work for the guidance of his two sons; but no trace of this is to be found, even in French. No doubt it too was an example-book as well as a book of courtesy.

The Oriental story-book that the Middle Ages found most amusing was that of the *Seven Sages of Rome*, which merits our more particular attention because one of the earliest Middle English poems is based on it—a poem some 4000 lines long, of the thirteenth century. There exist a host of versions of this collection of tales, and they differ much from one another. In general, however, the framework is the same; and in this remains the clearest trace of its Indian origin and its final ethical purpose. It was manifestly planned to illustrate certain qualities of men, and particularly women, which the Brahmins thought abiding, and which therefore they believed wise youth should be on their guard against. Easterners were very cynical with respect to women's virtue. They thought them unstable and guileful, and with plain delight related tales to indicate feminine perversity. On the other hand, they knew that rulers have always been a prey to evil counsel, that shrewd men surround every prince, and seek to influence him to their advantage. The *Book of the Seven Sages* presents in direct contrast an equal number of each of these two varieties, tales of designing women and evil counsellors, all to the glorification of wise teaching.

The Emperor Diocletian of Rome is said to have had a young son, Valentine, whom, when the empress dies, he commits to the care of Seven Wise Masters, that he may be well instructed in all arts and sciences. They pursue

their task zealously for seven years, and as a result the youth becomes exceptionally wise. Diocletian, meanwhile, has been married again to a young woman of great beauty, who, eager to see the heir to the throne, and jealous of his position, induces the emperor to summon him home. Learning by astrology that the prince will lose his life if he speaks for seven days after meeting his father, artful plans have to be contrived to preserve him against Diocletian's wrath during this time. The situation is complicated by the stepmother's interference. Becoming enamoured of Valentine, she acts towards him as Potiphar's wife to Joseph, and when her advances are rejected, accuses the prince of insulting her and of plotting the emperor's death. Diocletian in anger pronounces on his son a judgment of death, but is dissuaded from having it immediately executed by the arrival of one of the Sages, who tells him a warning example of woman's cunning. What is accomplished by the wise man in the day is undone by the wife in the evening by a story she tells to the discredit of counsellors. Thus time and again for seven days the emperor's mind is altered under conflicting influence. The empress relates seven tales, each of the wise men one, until finally, on the seventh day, when the sentence is about to be executed, the wife's arts having apparently prevailed, the boy himself is able to speak, tells a pertinent tale, and denounces the perfidy of the empress, who, being unable to deny his accusations, suffers the hard fate decreed at her instigation for the prince.

The setting of the *Seven Sages* is fairly stable wherever the book appears, in East or West. But in certain respects the Oriental versions differ from nearly all the Western. The most notable is the fact that the youth has only one preceptor, the famous philosopher Sindibad, who is the central figure throughout. Moreover, each Sage tells two tales in the Oriental versions, and only one in the Western. When we leave the framework and come to examine the stories themselves, we observe at once great diversity. The two groups have only four tales in common. And even in those of a single group frequent substitution has sometimes caused great unlikeness in the final form.

Of the Western versions three are especially significant. The oldest preserved, but not the most primitive, is the so-called *Dolopathos*, extant in Latin prose of about the year 1200, and in a long French poem (12,000 lines) by one Herbert, based on it. Here we have only one instructor, and the queen's stories are suppressed. Material from oral tradition (such, for example, as a

swan-maiden story) was included by preference. The *Sept Sages de Rome*, which probably arose about 1150 or earlier, attained greater popularity. A hundred or more manuscripts of the type exist. This comprises fifteen tales, the empress telling seven, the Sages seven, and the prince the last. Though with twice as many stories as the *Dolopathos*, it has only 5060 lines. A Latin redaction, the *Historia Septem Sapientum Romae*, had later (*c.* 1330 ?) a tremendous vogue, not only in France but also in many countries of Europe, particularly Germany. On it ultimately were based several late English versions, and a long poem by the sixteenth-century Scottish writer Rolland, which had considerable popularity in its day. The exact source of the early English poem is as yet undetermined.

It would be engaging to recount the different tales, all of them shrewd and pointed, but space does not permit. The streams of narrative that flowed into the great "Ocean of the Rivers of Story" (as one Eastern collection is called) are similar enough in colour to be easily detected, but they took up in their course through Western lands elements of diverse appearance, and the result is complex. In the early English version, the story of Merlin's unstable tower, and the like, appear alongside of that of the speaking magpie (like Chaucer's crow), and that of the treasure-tower of Octavian (previously of Rhampsinitus), whose son cut off his father's head to conceal his own guilt. Another story in the collection, concerning the unhappy husband, who thought to teach his profligate wife a lesson by locking her out, but was not wise enough to anticipate her wiles, and in the end got trapped himself and suffered for his pains, was told, it will be remembered, by Boccaccio, and afterwards in softened form by Molière.

The *Decameron* is likewise a composite of unlike elements. In it the setting is more real and artistic, the induction of each tale more skilfully made. During the terrible plague of 1348, seven fair and gentle ladies are represented by the author as withdrawing from Florence to a beautiful country-seat two miles

distant. With them they take three friends of the stronger sex as companions and protectors. In a lovely garden the ten associate together in gaiety, endeavouring to banish from their minds disagreeable thoughts of surrounding sorrow by the telling of tales. Each one of the party has a story to tell on each of the ten days that the entertainment lasts.

There is no evidence that Chaucer was acquainted with Boccaccio's great book, strange though the fact may be. He had plenty of suggestion in other collections of stories if he had needed any to guide him in his work; but his plan far surpasses all others previously conceived, and in its execution his art is often beyond praise. For all the Canterbury Tales in verse, except one or two, pre-existent parallels have here been shown. The Second Nun's Tale is a saint's life of an ordinary kind, as will shortly appear. The Canon's Yeoman's may be based on a real experience. The greatness of Chaucer's works is not due to the poet's power of invention, but to his human sympathy and genial humour, which transfigure his characters, and to the wonderful melody of his verse.

In England, as late as in Chaucer's time, such popular tales as were written in the vernacular were practically all in rhyme. But in Italian the prose tale had already attained classic dignity, and the gradual disappearance of the metrical fabliaux it would not have taken much perspicacity to foresee. That Boccaccio was not the first to collect and redact entertaining tales in prose is well known. The variegated collection known as the *Cento Novelle Antiche* was given shape before his time. Nor was he by any means the last. There soon arose in Italy a large company of *novellieri*, realistic story-tellers of wonderful productivity. Mention need here be made of the names of only a few whose novels were current in England: Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, Poggio, Bandello, Cinthio, and Straparola—all of whom, and more, contributed to a work which was one of the most influential in determining the themes of Elizabethan dramatists, namely, Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*. By the side of North's Plutarch and

Holinshed's *Chronicles*, this work takes a conspicuous place as one of the chief sources of Shakspere's material. In Italian novels he, like so many of his fellows, found plots ready-made, and without hesitation seized the available treasure. The French, among whom the fabliaux had arisen, having meanwhile adopted the new manner and material, maintained their old position as general distributors to Europe. It was through such works as the *Heptameron* of Margaret, Queen of Navarre, that much of the Italian production was communicated to the English. The Middle Ages thus provided for future generations a supply of fiction that has been turned to rich literary account.

In this chapter hints have been given how fabliaux prepared for farces, pious tales anticipated mysteries, and novels provided the bases of plays. It will presently be seen how debates persisted, and the custom of allegory yielded moralities. Legends of the Robert of Sicily type were early acted in public, and other romantic themes of many sorts were recast in dramatic form. The origins of the drama we shall not attempt to trace here; but it is in place to remark that play-acting did not begin abruptly, that the themes of dramas were not all churchly even in very early times, and that the methods of the stage were a popular growth.

CHAPTER VII

HISTORICAL WORKS

Chronicles

In the Middle Ages, far more than now, history and romance went hand in hand. The most scientific history contained fabulous elements and the most extravagant romance claimed authority. A prevailing belief in miracles and special dispensations of Providence led to the insertion in veracious documents of popular tradition not really susceptible of disproof, and made the acceptance of fanciful stories natural as an act of faith. The rhymed chronicles of mediæval England have little significance as compilations of fact. If otherwise unsupported, the historian views their statements with just suspicion. But those who would advise themselves of the influences that moulded the national sentiment of the English people, as well as students of the English language, will examine them with reward. For a proper appreciation of the literary and historical value of each, they must be viewed in connection with one another, for no one is independent of those that went before. All alike, the English metrical chroniclers had modest ambition—to convey to the ignorant laity interesting information obtained from easily accessible French or Latin sources, without learned pretension or refinement of rhetoric. Nevertheless, in literary merit their works more than hold their own with their Norman prototypes, and (comprising, when taken together, a vast number of lines) they form important records of the native speech.

It was about one hundred and forty years after the Conquest, some fifty years after the last entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* had been made, that it occurred to a parish priest of Lower Arley, in northern Worcestershire, to put into English the early history of the land in which he lived. His work is the most valuable single production in English speech between the Conquest and Chaucer, although it was at the same time one of the least potent in its influence.

All that we know of the author we learn from the striking words with which the history begins:

There was a priest in the land who was named Layamon. He was the son of Leovenath. May the Lord be gracious to him! He dwelt at Ernley, a noble church upon the Severn's bank—good it seemed to him there—near Redstone, where he read books. It came to him in mind, in his chief thought, that he would tell the noble deeds of England, what the men were named, and whence they came, who first possessed the English land after the flood that came from the Lord, that destroyed here all that it found alive except Noah and Shem, Japhet and Ham, and their four wives, who were with them in the ark. Layamon journeyed wide over the land and procured the noble books which he took as pattern. He took the English book that St. Bede made; another he took in Latin that St. Albin made; and the fair Austin who brought baptism in hither; the third book he took and laid there in the midst, that a French clerk made, who was named Wace, who well could write, and he gave it to the noble Eleanor, who was the high King Henry's queen. Layamon laid before him these books and turned the leaves; lovingly he beheld them. May the Lord be merciful to him! Pen he took with fingers, and wrote on book-skin, and the true words set together, and the three books pressed into one. Now prayeth Layamon for the Almighty God each good man that shall read this book and learn this counsel that he say together these soothfast words for his father's soul who brought him forth, and for his mother's soul who bore him to be man, and for his own soul that it be the better. Amen!

This charming preface exhibits the character of the author in unmistakable wise. A simple-hearted man, we observe, tender and devout, a sincere book-lover, an honest scholar, a faithful son. Evidently Layamon worked not for promotion or favour, not at the instigation of a patron in power, but for the love of

learning, for his people's good. His office was to read the service in a little country church, and in this retirement he found hours of leisure, which he improved for study. With enthusiasm he began to paint a picture of his country's past, and by the power of a rich poetic imagination he made it a work of living force. The basis of the *Brut* (for so Layamon called his work, after Brutus, the fabulous progenitor of the British) is clearly Wace's metrical version of Geoffrey of Monmouth. From the other books which he had before him he apparently took little if anything. He was unaware that the English Bede was connected with King Alfred, and by mistake (for which reasons could be offered) ascribed the Latin original to St. Albin and St. Augustine. Unless it be the tale of Pope Gregory and the English slaves in Rome, nothing seems to have been drawn from Bede in any form. We have no evidence that he was a man of much learning. He no doubt gathered together all the books he could acquire, and he gleaned also a good deal from oral tradition, but he finally found it best to follow closely in the footsteps of Wace.

Both Wace and Layamon were reading clerks, both subjects of the kings of England, contemporaries. But great is the difference between them in manner and spirit, as well as in the circumstances and condition of their lives. Wace was a Norman, who had associated with courtiers and witnessed royal pageants; Layamon, so far as we can tell, was an Englishman, in no way conspicuous by his parentage or position, who lived a narrow life, surrounded by plain people, in a remote country town. Wace was a writer by profession, who never lost sight of his patron, and eagerly expected a reward. Layamon, in undertaking his *Brut*, was actuated chiefly, perhaps wholly, by patriotic impulses, without thought of preferment; and we have no evidence that he wrote anything else. Wace's narrative is characterised by elegance, refinement, and courtly sentiment; Layamon's by earnestness, strength, and simple zeal. Wace is cool and conventional; Layamon emotional and unrestrained. If Wace was influenced by his Norman environment in his presentation of

British history, Layamon's English sentiments likewise suggested the style of his work. Wace's models were the metrical romances of the French; Layamon's the epic songs of Old England, the alliterative records of national events.

Perhaps nowhere does the difference between the attitude of Wace and that of Layamon come out more clearly than in their treatment of Arthur, whose history occupies about one-third of the *Brut*. To Wace he is the most brilliant of knights, the mirror of chivalry, a romantic hero rather than an actual king. Layamon, on the contrary, envisaged him in the light of his English ideals. He was of great physical strength, determined, and bold, a powerful, self-reliant monarch, who would brook no interference with his will, and established peace by might. Wace narrates in detail the circumstances of Arthur's fight with the giant Ritho, who demanded the King's beard; but Layamon hurries past such fantastic episodes in order to dwell on the tribute and hostages won from subject kings. An interesting English touch appears in his account of the fight with the giant of Mont St. Michel. Geoffrey and Wace represent Arthur as ready to take the monster at a disadvantage before he can defend himself; but to Layamon fair play in any combat was a right. After stating that the giant was asleep when the King arrived, so that he might readily have been slain without danger, he remarks that Arthur woke him first and put him on his guard, lest he should afterwards be reproached for a dishonourable deed.

Following the best Germanic traditions of valour, Arthur could on occasion be boastful and "gab," as we now should think, unbecomingly; but he always justified his assertions and maintained his dignity. Around him was gathered a body of men who in Layamon appear as the *comitatus* of a Germanic chieftain, rather than as the fellowship of knights-errant who in French romance occupied seats at the Round Table.

It is obvious that the overshadowing of the romantic episodes in Arthur's career, and the prominence given to his wars of

conquest, were due primarily to a desire to exalt him to a position of historical dignity, to represent him as a national figure of whom Englishmen might boast. Layamon's attitude towards Arthur was that of the majority of his countrymen, that of the later English chroniclers, as will presently appear.

Yet Layamon was ready to believe that mystery surrounded this marvellous king. He is the first to record how the three "weird sisters," or elves, appeared at his birth and predicted his fate. He introduces the picture of his departure to the other world to be healed of his wounds by Argante (Morgain), the fairy queen, and makes both him and Merlin utter the "British hope."

The scene of Arthur's death, reminding one in some features of Béowulf's, may be given in the poet's own words, thus modernised by Sir Frederic Madden:

Then was there [on the bloody field of Camelford] no more remnant in the fight of two hundred thousand men but Arthur the King and two of his knights. Wondrously much was Arthur wounded. There came to him a youth who was of his kindred: he was son of Cador, Earl of Cornwall; Constantine hight the lad; he was dear to the king. Him the king beheld where he lay on the field and said these words with sorrowful heart: "Constantine, thou art welcome; thou wert Cador's son; I give thee here my kingdom. Guard thy Britons ever in thy life; and hold for them all the laws that have stood in my days, and all the good laws of Uter's time. And I will fare to Avalon, to the fairest of all maidens, to Argante their queen, an elf most beautiful. And she shall make my wounds all sound, make me all whole with healing draughts. And afterwards I will come again to my kingdom and dwell with the Britons with mickle joy." Even with these words there drew near from the sea a little boat tossing on the waves, and two women therein wondrously formed; and they took Arthur anon and bare him to the boat and laid him down softly, and departed away. Then was accomplished what Merlin whilom said, that mickle grief should attend Arthur's forthfaring. The Britons believe yet that he is alive and dwells in Avalon with the fairest of all elves, and the Britons still ever look for Arthur to return. There is no man born of woman that can of sooth say more of Arthur. But whilom was a sage hight Merlin: he proclaimed with words (his sayings were sooth) that Arthur should yet come to the help of the Britons.

Dwelling as he did on the Welsh marches, Layamon was in the midst of living Arthurian tradition, and from Welsh legend he drew material with which occasionally to modify or expand Wace. The most significant of his additions, his elaborate account of the institution of the Round Table, of which mention has already been made, he doubtless found in a Welsh tale current in his neighbourhood. Seldom, however, are Layamon's modifications of Wace important so far as fact is concerned. Where his individuality appears is in the altered style of his narrative, the infusion of a new spirit. Wace made Geoffrey's History of the Kings of Britain less rhetorically impersonal, more vivid. More than Geoffrey he described scenes as an eye-witness, and pictured ancient warriors in modern guise. He made them speak oftener in person, and act more like men of his own age. Layamon was equally realistic in his own way. Anachronisms troubled him no whit more. He was determined to make his characters live real in the eyes of his fellows, and by graphic touches he further animated and actualised his story. His style, fashioned on that of his fathers, has all the picturesqueness and glow of the Anglo-Saxon past, with condensed metaphor and balanced phrase. Alliteration demanded a rich vocabulary, and Layamon's stock was astonishingly full and pure.

We shall get a good idea of the poet's style if we follow for a little his account of Arthur's struggles with his foreign foes. Witness first the speech put into his mouth when messengers from the Danes beg for peace, and promise, if allowed to return home, never more to molest the land:

Then laughed Arthur, with loud voice: "Thanks be to God that all dooms wieldeth that Childric the strong is tired of my land! My land he hath apportioned to all his chief knights, myself he thought to drive out of my country, hold me for base, and have my realm and my kin all put to death, my folk all destroyed. But with him it has happened as it is with the fox when he is boldest over the weald and hath his full play and fowls enow; for wildness he climbeth and rocks he seeketh; in the wilderness holes to him he worketh. For whosoever shall fare, he hath never any care. He

weeneth to be of power the boldest of all animals. But when to him come men under the hills, with horns, with hounds, with loud cries, the hunters there hollow, the hounds there give tongue, they drive the fox over dales and downs; he fleeth to the holm and seeketh his hole; into the farthest end of the hole he goeth; then is the bold fox of bliss all deprived, and men dig to him on every side; then is most wretched the proudest of all animals! So was it with Childric the strong and the rich; he thought all my kingdom to set in his own land; but now I have driven him to the bare death, whatsoever I will do, either slay or hang. Now will I give him peace, and let him speak with me. I will not slay him nor hang, but his prayer I will receive. Hostages I will have of the highest of his men, their horses and weapons ere they hence depart; and so as wretches they shall go to their ships, sail oversea to their good land, and there worthily dwell in their realm and tell tidings of Arthur the King, how I have freed them for my father's soul and for my freedom solaced the wretches."

It surely required imaginative power to compose this passage, of which there is no hint in the original. Evidently in the *Brut* liberties were taken with fact to make fancy free. Layamon reconstructed a poetic Arthur without heed to truth, yet with no desire to deceive.

Childric, we are informed, broke his oath and returned to harass the southern coast. For the following description of the invaders' conduct the poet may have had in mind the horrors of a real depredation, though he received suggestions from the French:

"As soon as they came on land, the folk they slew; the churls they drove off, that tilled the earth; the knights they hanged, that defended the land; all the good wives they struck with knives; all the maidens they murdered; all the learned men [clergy] they cast on gleeds; all the servants they slew with clubs; they filled the castles, laid waste the land, burned the churches—grief was among the people! Sucking children they drowned in the water; the cattle they took and slaughtered, carried it to their inns, boiled and roasted it; all they took that they came nigh. All day they sang of Arthur the King, and said that they had won homes that they would hold in their power, and there they would dwell winter and summer; and if Arthur were so bold that he would come to fight with Childric the strong and the rich, they would make of his back a bridge, and take all the bones of the noble king and tie them together with golden ties and lay them in the hall door, where each man should go forth to the worship of Childric the strong and the rich! This was all their game, for Arthur the King's shame; but all

it happened otherwise soon thereafter; their boast and their shame befel to themselves to shame; and so it doth well everywhere to men who so act."

Arthur is far away in the north when he hears this dire news. His indignation is fierce that his mercy has entailed such harm. A summons goes at once to his followers to make haste for revenge. Together they speed to Bath. The king arms for battle with elaborate care until he stands resplendent, "the fairest of knights, the noblest of race." His men he incites to unsparing slaughter of the "heathen hounds" who so treacherously have employed their "wicked crafts." Thus Arthur speaks: "And for they all are forsworn, so shall they be forlorn (destroyed). They shall be put to death, with the Lord's aid. March we now forward, fast together, even all as softly as if we thought no evil, and when we come to them I myself will commence, foremost of all I will begin the fight. Now we shall ride and glide over the land. Let no man on pain of his life make noise, but fare quickly. The Lord aid us!" Then Arthur the rich man began to ride; he proceeded over the weald and Bath would seek.

A severe conflict follows, in which "the stiff-minded king" does marvels. All the earth dins under his horse's hoofs. The first earl he meets he smites through the breast and cleaves his heart. "And the king called anon: 'The foremost is dead! Now help us the Lord, and the heavenly queen, who the Lord bore!' Then called Arthur, noblest of kings: 'Now to them, now to them! The beginning is well done.'"

The British slay two thousand of the wicked without the loss of one of their own men. With his own spear Arthur works dire destruction. "The king was all enraged as is the wild boar when in the beech wood he meeteth many swine." The Avon is bridged by the mail-clad slain. Childric flees to Bath hill and defends himself in desperation.

"Then yet called Arthur, noblest of kings: 'Yesterday was Baldolf of all knights boldest, but now he standeth on the hill and beholdeth the Avon, how the steel fishes lie in the stream! Armed with sword, their life is destroyed; their scales float like gold-dyed shields; there float their fins like spears. Strange things are come to this land—such beasts on the hill, such fishes in the stream.'"

After further taunts he pushes on, always in the front, inciting his men, until at last complete victory is the British reward, and Arthur thus gleefully addresses the slain leader of the enemy: "Thou didst climb this hill wondrously high as if thou wouldst to heaven; but now thou shalt to hell. There thou mayest learn much of thy kin. And greet thou there Hengest that was fairest of knights, Ebissa and Ossa, Octa and more of thy kin, and bid them dwell there winter and summer, and we shall live [here] in [this] land with bliss. Pray for your souls that happiness never come to them, and here shall your bones lie, beside Bath."

How strange the situation—Layamon the Englishman vehemently enthusiastic over the defeat of his English ancestors by their British foes! Reasons for the apparent inconsistency are not far to seek. In the first place, the Anglo-Saxons were invaders of England, and the poet's patriotism was for his country, not for his race. Distinctions of blood were early ignored by all Englishmen solicitous for the common weal. Then again, in Geoffrey and Wace the Anglo-Saxons were always represented as heathen, and the struggle against them was to vindicate the cause of Christ. Like Charlemagne and the Crusaders, Arthur waged a holy war. Elsewhere Saxons and Saracens are synonymous terms. Finally, it had come about, largely through the influence of the Normans, who were eager to boast of their new possessions in the face of the French, that Arthur was regarded not only as a national champion, but as a world-conqueror of amazing fame, and by the exaltation of his fancied achievements the country he had ruled assumed dignity abroad and justified English pride.

We are not aware of the exact date at which Layamon wrote. He makes no allusion to contemporary events. His reference, however, to Eleanor in the preface implies that she was then dead, so that the poem appears to have been composed after 1204. This coincides with the date of the separation of Normandy from England, and the foundation of an insular nationality. Under the influence of such a momentous event, Layamon may have decided to recount the glories of his island home.

Concerning the history of the work, the following facts are significant: (1) that the original manuscript is lost; (2) that only one copy of it remains in a form close to that in which we may presume it to have left the author's hands; (3) that, nevertheless, it was popular enough to be rewritten half a century later; but (4) that it then assumed a shape which, were the older copy lost, would give us a wrong impression of the poet's art.

The great importance of the *Brut* to the grammarian there is no need to emphasise. It is perhaps the chief monument of early Middle English speech, significant not only because of its length

(over 32,000 lines) but also because of its extraordinary freedom in vocabulary from foreign intermixture. To the student of the structure of poetry it is interesting because it betrays much freedom in the manner of alliterative verse: it contains a goodly number of rhymes, and assonance appears.

From the opening we pass to the closing years of the thirteenth century before we find other noteworthy English chronicles. Then, or shortly after, several were called forth by popular demand, written to satisfy the desires or needs of the middle classes, who had all along been growing steadily in power and were evincing more and more interest in national affairs.

These chronicles differ from the *Brut* notably in that they are brought up to date. They begin likewise at the beginning, and embody the fables of the British and Saxons, but they continue the narrative to their own times and record recent events. In plan and scope they thus resemble the more learned Latin histories, from which they derive much of their material, while in method they perpetuate the style of the chronicles in verse. The authors make no claim to originality; they declare themselves to be first and foremost popularisers, undertaking tasks for the common profit, not for their own glory. Had they desired fame, they would have tried writing in Latin.

The earliest of these chroniclers is usually called Robert of Gloucester. This name we may retain, for that one of the two conclusions in which the name appears is probably an integral part of the work; and the author not only wrote in the dialect of Gloucester, but was familiar with the locality. When he gives his name, he at the same time refers to an event which gives us reason to believe that he himself dwelt in the neighbourhood of Evesham in the year 1265, namely, the great darkness that attended the famous battle there, which he says was so great that the monks could not then read the service in the churches. It extended for thirty miles around, and was like that at the

Crucifixion; but only a few drops of rain fell. "This saw Robert that first made this book, and was well sore afraid." We are perhaps justified in the surmise that Robert was one of those who saw not only the darkness but the consternation of the monks, and that he was already then a member of the fraternity. Certainly the whole tone of his work is that of a stern ascetic, of a vehement, almost fanatical, upholder of the Church. He was eager to recognise God's hand in history; denounced roundly those who offended against His holy law; praised those who honoured Him by good works; was relentless in his attitude towards heathen; and showed no charity for the Jews. He was familiar with many ecclesiastical legends, and appears to have written some himself.

Uncertainty reigns not only with respect to Robert's personality and the original form of his book, but also with respect to his sources. Yet this problem has been solved in essentials. In the part corresponding to Layamon, the chronicler in general follows Geoffrey's Latin history, without apparently having recourse to Wace. For his geographical introduction and other matters he drew from Henry of Huntingdon, though he also consulted William of Malmesbury. In the second section, from about the year 800 to the Conquest, Henry and William were his chief sources; but he took material also from the *De Genealogia Regum Anglorum* and the *Vita Sancti Edwardi* of Ailred de Rievaulx, Ailred's influence being most evident in the history of Cnut and Edward the Confessor. In the legend of Queen Emma the author's account resembles most that of the Annals of Winchester. For the history of Count Robert of Gloucester a source in the Anglo-Norman continuation of the *Brut* has been pointed out. For the concluding period, to 1271, in addition to works already mentioned, annals of various kinds (especially those of Waverley) were laid under contribution. The influence of popular tradition and the lives of saints is also manifest throughout. In the latter part of his work, Robert's statements, though not wholly unbiassed, have the value of contemporary authority.

It cannot be said of Robert that he was a man of much

literary power. His work has been decried more than its due, but plainly it is not to be compared with Layamon's as a poetic achievement. He chose verse as a medium of conveying facts because its use in that way was traditional, not because he was a poet by nature. Only in rare instances does he show any superior qualities of art or judgment. But his love of England and passion for her praise make him a sympathetic and significant figure. "England is a well good land, I ween, of all lands the best," are the first words of the book, and strike a patriotic keynote. Like Layamon, he too lauds Arthur to the skies. The king's death, after his "last chivalrye" in opposing the traitor Modred, is to him a personal grief. Yet to him the "British hope" was a "British lie." Had not Arthur's bones been newly discovered at Glastonbury? Caliburn (Excalibur), he declares, was made in Ramsey or some such place, not in Avalon. His Arthurian material is more tinged by romance than Layamon's. "Chivalry" is a word familiar to him; and its highest embodiment, Gawain, he has come to regard as the "flour of corteysye." True, he had his doubts about the Conqueror, and denounces the deeds of some of his royal successors, but he felt the Normans to be in reality his fellow countrymen, and he desired the closest union of all Englishmen to maintain the honour of the land.

Shortly after Robert of Gloucester had made accessible to the people of his district the supposed facts of national history, a Northern contemporary undertook to do the same for those about him—a useful effort, since, because of the diversity of dialects in England at the time, works in the vernacular could attain to only a limited local popularity. This chronicle, as yet not published, is preserved in a single manuscript, which by some chance long ago strayed to Göttingen. It has, however, been carefully studied, and we have reliable information regarding its contents, authorship, and character.

A prologue of 225 lines is occupied with the fable of the settlement of England by Albion and her sisters, which is drawn from a French source. Then, for some 27,000 lines, the historian

follows the account of Geoffrey's book, and afterwards narrates, with the help of authorities not definitely determined, the subsequent history of England to the coronation of Edward III. The whole extends to the great length of almost 40,000 lines. There is good evidence that the author stopped writing in the year 1327. His name, it would seem, was Thomas Bek of Castelford, a village two miles from Pontefract in the south of York.

If he has been correctly identified, he was an old man of at least eighty when he ended his chronicle. Leland knew him as the author of a history of Pontefract and of the Cistercian order to which he belonged, both in Latin. In his work he pays special heed to happenings of interest to Yorkshiremen, and dwells at length on all those matters of Scottish history which were related to England. He is, of course, an English partisan in his attitude, but he does not equal Robert of Gloucester in enthusiasm. He differs also from Robert in exhibiting favour for the English kings, and in that he appears to have been fonder of the romances of adventure than of the legends of the Church.

Thomas's chronicle, unlike those of Layamon and Robert of Gloucester, was written in the short rhymed couplet of the French. In an anonymous short chronicle, likewise in couplets, some minstrel covered the ground from Brutus to the death of Piers Gaveston (1312) in a little over a thousand lines. Such a production has only a curious interest, as illustrating what sad distortion history can undergo in reckless hands. Yet its very faults may have gained it success with a common audience, who perhaps approved the writer in giving more space to the wrestling-match of Corineus and the giant Geomagog at the first landing of Brutus in Britain than to the whole of Arthur's life. At all events, some one thought it worth while to continue it to the beginning of Edward III.'s reign.

It was a little later, in 1338 (about the time of Chaucer's birth), that the next important rhymed chronicle appeared. Then a devout old man, residing in a priory of the Gilbertine order at Sixhill in Lincolnshire, wrote *The Story of England* in 16,730

lines of fluent verse. Some thirty-five years previously he had composed, also in verse, an important didactic treatise, replete with anecdotes, called *Handlyng Synne*, of which we shall later treat. This author, one of the leading English writers of the early fourteenth century, was called Robert Mannyng, or Robert of Brunne, from the name of his birthplace, the present Bourne, in Lincolnshire. This was but six miles from Sempringham, the mother-house of the Gilbertine order, which house the poet entered in 1288. His chronicle has practically no independent historical value. The author states frankly that in the early part of his narrative he followed Wace, and that when Wace failed him he took Langtoft as an authority, and merely reproduced in English what he found in French. He would from the first have followed Langtoft (a fellow-Yorkshireman, for whom he professes great admiration) had he not disapproved of the way the French writer "overhopped" events to him significant. His translation is faithful, but not slavish. Not only does he make slight additions here and there to provide a better connection, he also interpolates at will material from other written sources such as Bede, Ailred de Rievaulx, Henry of Huntingdon, and Nicholas Trivet, as well as from romances on Havelok and Richard Cœur de Lion, and perhaps some popular songs. He seems also to have used a Life of St. Edmund. Possibly some of his additions are based on oral traditions or his own experiences.

What interests us most in Robert of Brunne is his avowed object in writing. Referring to Wace and Langtoft, he says:

> As they have written and said
> Have I all in my English laid,
> In simple speech as I couth,
> That is lightest in man's mouth.
> I made nought for no disours,
> Nor for no seggers (reciters), nor harpers,
> But for the love of simple men
> That strange English cannot ken; . . .
> I made it not for to be praisëd,
> But that the lewd (ignorant) men were aisëd.

His modest personality it is pleasant to remember. Evidently of genial nature, sympathetic and unaffected, he won the people's confidence. His chief concern, as he tells us, being for "the commonalty," "that blithely would listen" to him, he adapted his "story" to their needs. He was above all anxious that they should get "solace" from it "when they sat in fellowship." His poem was to be a means of entertainment when read aloud at common gatherings, about the hearth, in the ale-house, or at the fair. Many a time no doubt he had associated with the poor in their homes or at their festivals, and listened without prejudice or scorn to their coarse jests and ignorant talk. Thus, understanding their temper as well as their needs, he produced a book from which they must have got satisfaction as well as advantage. The value of his work to his contemporaries establishes its importance to-day.

Other metrical chronicles were written in the vernacular in the fifteenth century. *The Original Chronicle of Scotland*, by Andrew of Wyntoun, covers the period from the creation to 1408. Wyntoun († *c.* 1425) was Canon Regular of the priory of St. Andrews and Prior of St. Serf's in Loch Leven. John Hardyng's Chronicle traces English history from the earliest period to 1461. The author took part in the battle of Agincourt, and was for many years constable of the castle of Kyme in Lincolnshire. But of these and other historical works, such as the English Chronicle by the Augustinian friar John Capgrave († 1464), we shall later treat.

Political Poems

It has already been observed that the chroniclers in recording the events of recent times frequently made use of contemporary poems to which these had given rise. William of Malmesbury, for example, often utilised popular English songs, and snatches of others may be found quoted in the French history of Pers de Langtoft and the translation by Robert of Brunne.

Fabyan preserves Scottish songs relating to the siege of Berwick (1296) and the battle of Bannockburn (1314). The latter of these exemplifies the minstrel character of such productions, intended as they were for popular chant:

> Maidens of England, sore may ye mourn
> For your lemmans ye have lost at Bannockburn
> With hevelow.
> Why weened the King of England
> So soon to have won Scotland?
> With rumbalow.

In the romance of *Richard Coer de Lion* we read of sailors in a sea-fight struggling to overtake their enemies:

> They rowed hard, and sung thereto
> With hevelow and rumbeloo.

A large number of songs that must once have existed have disappeared to the last vestige, influential for the moment but unrecorded and ephemeral. Those still by chance extant reveal the earnestness and integrity of the common people, their simple, unpolluted patriotism, their stalwart pride of race.

Dating from the reign of Henry III. is a spirited *Song against the King of Almaigne*, directed against Henry's brother, Richard, Earl of Cornwall. Specially emphasised is the circumstance of his sheltering himself in a windmill after the defeat of the royal army at the battle of Lewes in 1264. The song was evidently written by a partisan of Simon de Montfort, then at the head of the national party, and echoes the general exultation at the fall of his deceitful foe. "Richard, though thou be ever trichard (tricker), trick shalt thou never more"—so runs the mocking refrain. Deep-rooted antipathy to the French appears in the *Song on the Flemish Insurrection*, called forth by the defeat of the Count of Artois at the battle of Courtrai in 1302, "wherethrough many a French wife wrings her hands and sings waylaway." That on the *Execution of Sir Simon Fraser*, composed in 1306, soon after the battle of Kirkencliff, evinces the Englishman's con-

temptuous attitude towards the Scots, who were all traitors in his eyes:

Prot! Scot, for thy strife!
Hang up thy hatchet and thy knife
While him lasteth the life
With the long shanks.

A poem *On the King's Breaking his Confirmation of Magna Charta*, composed towards the end of 1311, when Edward II. joined his banished favourite Piers Gaveston in the North, contains the following statements of four wise men:

1. For might is right, the land is lawless; for night is light, the land is loreless; for fight is flight, the land is nameless.

2. For one is two, the land is strengthless; for weal is woe, the land is ruthless; for friend is foe, the land is loveless.

3. For lust hath leave, the land is thewless; for thief is reave, the land is penniless; for pride hath sleeve, the land is almsless.

4. For will is red (counsel), the land is wreakful; for wit is qued (wicked), the land is wrongful; for good is dead, the land is sinful.

The poet makes a plea for love and charity, characteristics of the true Christian life.

Most interesting of the English political poems of the fourteenth century are those of Lawrence Minot, an author of whom nothing definite is known, but who appears to have lived on the border of the East Midland and the North, and who wrote under the immediate impression of events between 1333 and 1352. His favourite metre is the alliterative long line, rhyming in couplets, but he also uses short lines combined in couplets or stanzas. To exemplify Minot's style, may be quoted the opening and closing strophes of his poem regarding the vengeance taken for Bannockburn:

Scots out of Berwick and of Aberdeen,
At the Bannockburn were ye too keen;
There slew ye many sakless (innocent), as it was seen,
And now has King Edward wroken (avenged) it, I ween,
It is wroken, I ween, well worth the while;
(Be)ware yet with the Scots, for they are full of guile.

But many a man threats and speaks full ill
That some times were better to be stone still;
The Scot in his words has wind for to spill,
For at the last Edward shall have all his will;
He had his will at Berwick, well worth the while;
Scots brought him the keys, but get (look out) for their guile.

We have only eleven poems from Lawrence Minot's hand; but these are contained in a unique manuscript, and it is highly probable that he wrote still others of the same kind, and maybe some religious pieces. The themes of his extant verse are incidents of Edward's wars in the North, or on the Continent, such as the battles of Halidon Hill and Neville's Cross, the sack of Southampton, the sea-fight at Sluys, the siege of Tournay, the victory of Crécy, the taking of Calais and Guines. These war-ballads are at once lyric and epic. They are repeatedly addressed to listeners; they have the swing of the song, and familiar rhyme tags; but they also narrate events—in the mood of the partisan, to be sure, rather than in that of the scrupulous historian, yet well enough to indicate the chief moments of the actions celebrated and to arouse the interest of all, especially perhaps the young. Throughout the author displays himself as a sturdy, self-satisfied Englishman, bitter in his dislike of the Scot, and contemptuous of the French. Since the birth of Christ, he declares, no one had fought better than the English at times. They were ready to tackle the French at the odds of one to six. He makes a straight appeal to the people at large for an immediate, positive response, trying to arouse their zest for foreign war. He is plainly patriotic; he shows considerable versatility in the use of metrical forms; his style has vigour and dash. But nevertheless we must acknowledge that he judged aright in branding his own wit as "thin." His phraseology is too threadbare, his cry too shrill, his sentiments too narrow and superficial, to permit us to rank him high among poets, even of the mediæval sort. Henry III. kept a Frenchman, Henri d'Avranches, at his court as a "versificator," and paid him a good salary to write about his royal

deeds. Minot might suitably have served as a sort of poet-laureate to Edward III., his "comely" king, "a noble prince," whom he delighted to laud, and for whom he thus prayed:

God that shaped both sea and sand,
Save Edward, King of England,
Both body, soul, and life,
And grant him joy without strife:
For many men to him are wroth
In France and in Flanders both:
For he defendeth fast his right,
And thereto Jesu grant him might,
And so to do both night and day,
That it may be to Goddës pay (pleasure).

Minot's political poems were not, of course, the only ones evoked by the stirring times of Edward III. Concerning the battle of Halidon Hill there is extant at least one other English song of exultation, which is called in the manuscript a "romance." And such poems, crude though they may be artistically, are valuable as manifestations of contemporary feeling.

Standing somewhat apart from other political verse appear visions and prophecies. In a credulous time, when the door of the future was unlocked to so many who wished to gather material for warnings, it was natural to have the vision used to stir a superstitious monarch to service for the Church, and this seems to have been the purpose of him who wrote the five visions of Adam Davy, "marshal" of Stratford-atte-Bowe, concerning Edward II. The dreamer saw him once as a pilgrim to Rome, riding an ass and wearing a grey cap; again, together with the Pope, "crowned with great bliss" in token that he should be emperor of Christendom; while on a third occasion the poet fancied himself in the chapel of the Virgin when her Son obtained leave from her to convey Edward on a crusade.

Of Davy the poet says: "Wel swithe (very) wide his name is known." So had it been before him with a far greater seer,

into whose mouth was put much political prophecy. Minot begins his poem on the landing of Edward at La Hogue (1346):

> Men may read in romance aright
> Of a great clerk that Merlin hight;
> Full many books are of him written
> As these clerks well may witten (know),
> And yet in many privy nooks
> Men may find of Merlin books.

He then proceeds to give one of Merlin's prophecies, and applies it to the war in France. Similar prophecies of Merlin were again enumerated in a poem of greater length with different application. They all rely for credence on the mage's fame as established by Geoffrey of Monmouth, which served more than once a national cause. Closely allied with Merlin, as we have seen, was the Scottish prophet Thomas of Erceldoun, who was fabled to have learned of the future from a fairy queen. Some at least of the vaticinations perpetuated in the fifteenth century under his name were written before the battle of Halidon Hill (1333). And the use of the names of both Merlin and Thomas to float anticipatory judgments was kept up for many generations.

In the *Scalacronica* an English prophet, William Banister, is associated with Thomas of Erceldoun as men "whose words were spoken in figure like the prophecies of Merlin." And Ritson pointed out that "Fordun's interpolator speaks of an English knight of this name, who, in the night in which Edward the First died, saw, in a vision, that monarch's soul insulted and flagellated by devils."

That rhyme was used in English prophecies as early as the twelfth century is evident from the so-called *Here Prophecy*, which arose soon after 1189, when Ralph FitzStephen set up the image of a hart over a house at Here (?), which had been given to him by Henry II.

Satires

Though satirical denunciations appear in almost every sort of mediæval English writing—especially, of course, in didactic

works—formal satires are few, and these generally over-serious and lumbering. In contrast to the French style, a tone of severe earnestness characterises most of the attacks of English poets on contemporary evils. They show themselves more ready to deliver bludgeon blows than rapier thrusts, rely more on the might of threat than on the force of ridicule, use the weapons of Thor rather than those of Odin. Lightness is manifest in *The Order of Fair-Ease* and *The Land of Cokaygne*, wherein the monks are humorously denuded of reverence; but these works are translations or imitations of the French.

From the time of Edward I. dates a *Song of the Husbandman*, in strophes of alternately eight and four lines, with alliteration and rhyme. Its subject is the burden of taxation to support foreign wars. All kinds of officials, the author points out, had designs on the poor labourer. He was hunted "as hounds do the hare on the hill." "Who once wore robes, now wear rags." "Lither (grievous) it is to lose where there is little." "Thus breed many beggars bold." Bitterly the poet laments the consternation and woe abroad in the land.

In another satirical dirge of the same period, the pride, covetousness, and contentiousness of the time were exhibited by means of the fable of the fox and the wolf, who escape the clutches of the lion by means of bribes, while the poor ass suffers for his simplicity. Oppressors escape just punishment by guile, and the innocent suffer the rigours of the law on account of their honesty. "Those that are in highest life are most charged with sin." Elsewhere, the consistory courts come in for special rebuke, for in them the peasants were often badgered, browbeaten, and beguiled by clerks and summoners.

Social unrest is revealed in the attacks *On the Retinues of Great People*, which were often made up, it would seem, of ribalds, harlots, horse-cheats, and others thought worthy of hell-fire; and on the prevailing extravagance in dress, which was inveighed against with such persistence that Parliament at last strove to control luxurious display of raiment by special enactment.

Earlier, in 1275, a statute was issued under the title "Against slanderous reports, or tales, to cause discord betwixt king and people"—with what effect we know not. But more than a statute was needed to stem the tide of direct and indirect denunciations of the clergy which in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries appeared in English. The dialectic inanities of "false clerks" were ridiculed in the *Song of Nego*. And even the pillars of the Church were openly denounced. In a short poem, *When Holy Church is Under Foot*, it is pointed out that simony has taken the place of Simon as the rock on which the Church is built. The Church, formerly so beloved, is now despised by all. Even the Pope is guilty of bribery. But most notable is the sorry state of ecclesiastical conditions set forth in a poem *On the Evil Times of Edward II.*, preserved in the Auchinleck MS. It is composed of 476 long lines, but is incomplete. The author undertakes to tell why there is war and revenge and manslaughter in the land, why hunger and dearth have subdued the poor, why their cattle are dead and corn is dear.

The clergy do amiss. Truth is little among them. At the court of Rome, "where Truth should begin," it is forbidden the place. He dare not enter though the pope should call him in, for the pope's clerks have sworn his death. For fear of being slain he dare not appear among the cardinals. If he meets Simony, he will have his beard shaken. The wisest clerk in the world would not be heard at Rome if he came silverless, but any wretch is welcome if he brings gold. Some bishops and archbishops are fools and lead a sorry life. They dare not reprove their clergy for fear of being betrayed themselves. Certainly Holy Church has much degenerated since St. Thomas was slain. He was a pillar to hold her upright. Now too many prelates serve king as well as Church. Archdeacons take meed of one another, and let the parsons and priests have wives. Covetousness stops their mouths. When a post is vacant it is sold to the highest bidder. The new incumbent does his own sweet will. He gathers money and rides out of town with hawks and hounds into a strange country, where he dwells comfortably, leaving his church to a thief and a whore. Though the bishop knows of the evil behaviour of his reckless subordinates, a little money will stop his mouth. If a parson have a priest of clean life, who is a good counsellor to maiden and to wife, there will come a "daff" and replace him for a little less, though he cannot do a farthing's worth of good, scarcely sing a mass but ill, and thus

shall the parish be ruined for lack of lore. A lewd priest is no better than a jay in a cage. Abbots and priors counterfeit knights. Pride is master in every house of an Order. Religion is despised. The poor are kept out of the monasteries. The monks dress comfortably and give themselves up to ease and gluttony. They are fat and red-cheeked. The friars preach more for a bushel of wheat than to save a soul. In shrift they discriminate between the rich and the poor. They fight for the corpse of a rich man. If a corpse is fat, the friar hastens to the *dirige*; if it is lean, he loafs about his cloister and keeps his feet clean at home. A man can bear false witness against his wife at a consistory court and get rid of her, then betake himself to his neighbour's spouse, and while he has silver he suffers no harm. False physicians help men to die, they pretend that a man is sicker than he is, deceive the wife to get money for medicines, and themselves eat the good dishes she prepares. Earls, barons, and knights are no longer true to their calling. Instead of going to the Holy Land, they dispute with one another at home. They are lions in the hall and hares in the field. In their dress they can hardly be distinguished from gleemen. He who should be as courteous and gentle as a lady can chide like a town-scold. Young boys are dubbed knights. Squires are no longer gentlemen, but profane and false. Justices, "who will do wrong for meed," sheriffs, mayors, and bailiffs all deserve the lash of scorn. The king is deceived by them. His officials are cheats. The poor are pillaged, browbeaten, oppressed. Attorneys, chapmen, assisors are likewise deceitful. "God send truth into this land," prays the poet, "for trickery dureth too long." "For falseness is so far forth over all the land i-sprung, that well-nigh is no truth neither in tongue nor in heart, and therefore it is no wonder though all the world smart." The afflictions of the people are a righteous retribution. Great lordings are brought low because of their pride. The folly of prelates ministers to civil strife. They do not see the truth for mist. They dread more to lose their lands than the love of Christ.

> For had the clergy holden together,
> And not flecked about, neither hither nor thither,
> But looked where the truth was, and there have bileved (remained),
> Then were the baronage whole, that now is all to-dreved (driven apart)
> So wide
> But certes England is shamed through falseness and through pride.

This poem has been summarised in detail because of its large significance. The author wrote before Langland was born. Yet here before him the plain message of the Plowman is delivered. Here is the same earnestness without desire for revolt, the same spirit of strong denunciation prompted by

unselfishness, the same love of England and sorrow for her shame—above all, the same insistence on the need to seek out and glorify Truth.

Likewise interesting in the study of Langland's work, as well as for its own sake, is the alliterative poem entitled *A Treatise and Good Short Refreyte* (*Dispute*) *betwixt Winner and Waster*, which will be discussed from other points of view when all the products of the so-called alliterative revival are examined together. In this place, however, it deserves notice as a satire of merit on the social conditions of England at the middle of the fourteenth century. Winner and Waster are the leaders of two hosts whom the poet sees in a vision ready for angry conflict. Each lays his case before King Edward III., who undertakes to be their judge. He stops their wrangling, and tells each to dwell where each is loved most, Winner together with the pope and cardinals of Rome, Waster in the busy streets of London, until Winner accompanies him on his Continental wars. The poem contains some 500 long lines, but is incomplete. It is remarkable for its freshness and force.

In a short stanzaic poem entitled *Sir Penny* we have a fourteenth-century form of Latin rhymes of Map's time, the titular character being suggestive of Lady Meed. A satire on conditions in the reign of Richard II., in macaronic verse, begins as follows:

> Sing I would, but, alas! *descendunt prospera grata;*
> England sometimes was *regnorum gemma vocata;*
> Of manhood the flower *ibi quoque quondam floruit omnis,*
> Now gone is that tower, *traduntur talia sompnis,*
> Lechery, sloth, and pride, *hii sunt quibus Anglia paret,*
> Sith truth is set aside, *dic qualiter Anglia staret.*

Latin had been all along the chief medium of clerical protest, and it was not suddenly abandoned. But English was bound to vindicate itself fully. English songs stirred the people tremendously when learned works were the reading of but a few. Gower's *Vox Clamantis* could have been in no large sense potent, but such

words as "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?"—the refrain of English poems of the same period—became the mottoes of revolt. With the incidental satire in Chaucer's work all are familiar. Like Langland's and Gower's, it was prepared for by works written in Latin, French, and English by clerks.

In this connection may also be mentioned a stray satirical poem of later date, also a vision, which seems to betray in its setting the influence of *The Pearl*, and now bears the descriptive title *Why I cannot be a Nun.*

A maiden who desires to be a nun, but whose father is opposed, goes walking one May morning in her garden to see "the sweet effect of April flowers," and listen to the song of beautiful birds. In a fair arbor she prays to God to help His handmaid "despised and in point to perish." Then she falls in a trance "among the herbs fresh and fine." While asleep, with her woeful head on a bed of camomile, she fancies that a fair lady addresses her by her own name, Katherine, saying that she has come to comfort her. The girl recognises before her the most beautiful and finely-attired lady she has ever seen, and straightway forgets all her mourning. Her companion, whose name, she discovers, is Experience, guides her to a nunnery, which is fair without but ill-governed within. There dwelt Dames Pride, Hypocrisy, Envy, Love Inordinate, Lust, Wanton, Vice. Dame Devout had been put to death by Dame Sloth and Dame Vainglory, Dame Chastity had "little cheer." Dame Patience and Dame Charity occupied a chamber outside the place. But Dame Envy was in every corner, and Dame Disobedient was very busy. Experience explains at last to Katherine that she has shown her this convent "so full of sin" to reconcile her to her father's will. Not all nuns, but the most part, were "feeble, ignorant, and froward." Yet they should be what their attire indicates. "A fair garland of ivy green which hangeth at a tavern door is a false token as I ween, but if there be good wine and sure." Nuns should follow the example of holy virgin saints.

In a thirteenth-century *Satire on the Monks and People of Kildare* (containing twenty stanzas of four lines each, with changing, but insignificant, refrain), various saints, ecclesiastics, and tradespeople are bidden "hail," and briefly described. The minstrel's final appeal to his friends is "to drink deep and make them glad."

CHAPTER VIII

RELIGIOUS WORKS

Bible Paraphrase and Apocryphal Story

In early Anglo-Saxon times it was in Northumbria that poetry flourished; and the themes of the leading Northern poets, Cædmon and Cynewulf, were almost exclusively religious. The literary preëminence of Northumbria was soon, however, overthrown, and for nearly six centuries scarcely a singer of note is to be found there. When at last Northern poets again appear, they are seen to write once more in the spirit of their long-distant predecessors: they treat with earnestness and power religious themes in verse. Late in the thirteenth century was composed in the North a noteworthy metrical paraphrase of the Psalms; and in the fourteenth, lives of saints, legends, and other sorts of religious poems abound.

In the South before 1150 the West-Saxon Gospels were transcribed. About 1300 a prose Psalter was prepared in the West Midland. But deserving more particular mention are the paraphrases of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, by an anonymous author in the South-East Midland, about 1250. Here we have the chief events of the Biblical account with little legendary embellishment, with little comment or sermonising. We find not only the salient features of the narrative of the first two books, but also certain parts of Numbers and Deuteronomy relating to the wanderings of the Israelites and the life of Moses. But how different is this

from Cædmon's work! It is not simply that alliterative long lines have yielded to short couplets, and sonorous to limpid phrase. There is a fundamental change in the author's tone, and in his attitude towards the Bible. He wrote rather patronisingly for the unlettered, whom he thought "ought to be as fain as are birds at daybreak when they are told sooth tales, in their native speech and with small words, of the hills of bliss and the dales of sorrow"; and in the spirit rather of the rhymed chronicle than of the ancient epic. Moreover, he based his narrative not so much on the Bible itself as on a compendium of its substance, with a commentary, the *Historia Scholastica* of Peter Comestor, which for nearly a century had enjoyed great esteem.

This work was also much utilised by the author of another poem of a somewhat similar character, but planned on a grander scale, the encyclopedic book of scriptural story, called the *Cursor Mundi* ("for almost it overrunneth all"), which challenges attention at once by reason of its avowed purpose. It was written not for the clergy but for the laity; not for those who could speak or read French, but for the common English of England; not simply to edify and instruct, but to entertain and amuse. It was written, moreover, in deliberate competition with the popular romances, with which both the poet and his readers were familiar. Thus the poem begins: "Men yearn to hear gests and read romances in divers manners: of Alexander the Conqueror; of Julius Cæsar the emperor; of the strong strife of Greece and Troy, where many thousands lost their lives; of Brut the bold hero, the first conqueror of England; of the mighty King Arthur, incomparable in his time; of the wonderful adventures of his knights, such as Gawain, Kay, and others of the Round Table; how King Charles and Roland fought (with Saracens they wished no peace); of Tristram and his dear Ysolt, for whom he became mad; of Yonec [the hero of a lay by Marie]; of Amadas and Ydoine—stories of divers things, of princes, prelates, and of kings; many songs of divers rhyme, English, French, and Latin." This was an unquestioned fact. We have already seen how great was the mass

of writings current in England on these secular themes. Men were always ready "to read and to hear" such pleasant works. Their influence, however, the author thought, was not always good: it made for licentiousness and loose living. "Love paramours" had thereby become the fashion. He therefore offers a rival attraction. He will sing of the Virgin, a lady more true, loyal, and constant than any other, more beautiful and ready to reward. In order to build on a good foundation, he will begin at the beginning, namely, the Holy Trinity, and thence he will trace the history of the world as illustrating God's providence.

Thus, by way of competition with the popular secular works of the day, was composed (*c.* 1320) a poem some 24,000 lines long. Such an immense accumulation of legendary material baffles adequate description in a short space. It is a fanciful account of the seven ages of the world: from the Creation to the time of Noah, from the Flood to the confusion of Tongues, from the time of Abraham to the death of Saul, from the reign of David to the captivity of Judah, from the parentage of Mary to the time of John the Baptist, from the baptism of Jesus to the finding of the Cross (the time of grace), the day of Doom and the state of the world thereafter. Very remarkable is that part which contains the legends of the Holy Rood. The work seems to have been extremely popular.

Appended to the *Cursor Mundi* is an account of the *Assumption of Our Lady*, taken, the author says, from a Southern poem on that theme. This latter was written about the middle of the thirteenth century, and exists in various versions, either independently or embodied in a legend-cycle, in short couplets, in stanzas, or in prose. It is closely connected with Wace's poem on *The Conception of Mary*, but includes matter of other derivation. The legend itself arose in the early centuries of our era, and was widespread in many forms in Oriental as well as in Latin and other European languages. The earliest English version seems to have been prepared for the recitation of a minstrel, who appeals to his audience for quiet: "Sit ye now still, both more

and less"; but elsewhere the narrative is spoken of as a "lesson," and became, we know, a regular part of the Church service. At the conclusion we are informed that the archbishop, St. Edmund of Pontenay (*i.e.* Edmund Rich), granted an indulgence of forty days to any who heard or read it "with good-will." Moreover, it was affirmed that whenever the poem was read aloud no woman should that day die in childbirth, or any misadventure happen in field or street or hall. Such a claim, no doubt, stimulated to attention many practical folk who otherwise might have spent their time in worldly diversions; and familiarity with the work would certainly confirm the credulous in their ready acceptance of the numerous "miracles of the Virgin" then current. Christ is therein represented as promising to Mary whatever prayer she might make for the sick or sinful who served her truly. No matter if a man had transgressed in every possible way, Our Lady ("Queen of Heaven" and "Empress of Hell") could obtain grace for him at the last hour of his life. As Chaucer says in his *A B C*:

> Soth is, that God ne graunteth no pitee
> With-oute thee: for God, of his goodnesse,
> Forgiveth noon, but it lyke un-to thee.
> He hath thee maked vicaire and maistresse
> Of al the world, and eek governeresse
> Of hevene, and he represseth his Justyse
> After thy wille, and therefore in witnesse
> He hath thee crowned in so royal wyse.

As was almost inevitable, a large amount of apocryphal material was current among the English. We have a detailed account of Christ's ancestors and conception in the "song" on the *Birth of Jesus*. Fables of His *enfances* are narrated in *The Childhood of Jesus*, in a style that startles from first to last. Christ as an infant is represented as worshipped by dragons, wolves, and other wild beasts, and as performing the most extraordinary and unnecessary miracles. Perhaps the oddest of His boyhood exploits is His hanging of a pitcher on a sunbeam; when His Jew

companions try to do the same, they of course break their vessels, but Jesus makes them whole again. The short thirteenth-century English lives of *Judas* and *Pilate* are similarly embellished. Judas is represented as a foundling put out to sea alone, who turns out "a wicked bird," and has a career that reminds us now of Sir Gowghter's, now of Sir Degare's: he is wild and fierce in youth; in his adventurous career he marries his mother. By repentance for his misdeeds he is led to enter the Lord's service, but he sins sadly, and dies a woeful death. Of the fictions about Pilate, the most striking is the difficulty in getting his body buried after the unhappy man has stabbed himself in the emperor's jail. Various unsuccessful attempts are made to conceal him elsewhere (in the Tiber, for example), but at last he is carried to a lake in the wilderness, where a rock opens and the corpse darts into it like an arrow shot from a bow. The story of Titus and Vespasian, and their revenge on Jerusalem and the Jews who contrived the Crucifixion, including the legend of St. Veronica, is contained in *The Vengeance of God's Death*, a poem of 3770 lines in short couplets, written by an anonymous monk in the third quarter of the fourteenth century (in the neighbourhood of London), and in a closely-allied alliterative poem entitled *The Siege of Jerusalem*. The former is based for the most part on a single French work, with additions, it would seem, from the Gospel of Nicodemus, the *Gesta* (*Acta*) *Pilati*, and the *Legenda Aurea*. It is a sort of religious epic in praise of Christ. Other shorter poems tell of *The Fall and Passion*, and the joys and sorrows of Christ and Mary. The history of the redemption is unfolded in a fifteenth-century translation of the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, over 5000 lines long and artificially constructed.

In Wycliffe's time came a reaction against the overloading and distortion of Biblical narrative by apocryphal tales, and one great poet then arose who took pains to eliminate legend in his rewriting of Scripture narrative. Practically nothing of the sort appears in those admirable poems, *Cleanness* and *Patience*, in

which the author of *The Pearl*, by telling anew familiar tales from the Bible, most nobly inculcates purity and resignation to the divine will.

Homilies

The change of government in England resulting from the Norman Conquest made very little difference to the common people. They performed much as before their humble round of duties, told at leisure the stories they had long been accustomed to hear, sang about the fire the old ballads of their fathers, and on holy days attended service in the parish church. Saxon bishops and high prelates were speedily displaced, but the inferior clergy maintained their livings undisturbed, for these were not desired by foreigners, who indeed would have been useless in places where no French was understood. To common folk, then, religious instruction was given uninterruptedly in the vernacular —a fortunate circumstance, for thus the English speech was kept alive amongst them in something like literary form. The clergy had inherited sermons from Anglo-Saxon collections, and these they modernised and used regularly on the occasions for which they were intended, adding naturally to the store when need came. The majority of their discourses were probably of the ephemeral sort, prepared for immediate use and seldom polished: sermons about which the aspiring clergy really cared were prepared in Latin for delivery before clerks. Some English homilies, however, were given permanent form, and of these a few from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries have come down to us. When not mere transliterations of the writings of Ælfric and such as he, they are written in the same style and spirit that these manifest. No real break from the Anglo-Saxon is obvious in manner or matter, the traditions of the past having evidently followed a continuous, if hidden, course.

These sermons were practical and straightforward, suited to everyday needs. They contained many illustrations, calculated no doubt to stir the drowsy to interest. Fables were frequently

moralised, and the *Physiologus* rendered its share of examples. Allegory was the keynote.

In one sermon we are told of the adder with a jewel in its head, which by stopping one ear with its tail hears not the charmer's voice; and to it men are likened: Christ is the stone of stedfastness, and we close our ears when we understand aright the principles of the Christian faith. We read also of the adder that renews her youth by creeping through a perforated stone, leaving her old skin behind her: we creep through the five holes of Christ's wounds when with fivefold penitence we make amends for our sins.

Strangely enough, such early homilies contain almost no allusions to contemporary events, and throw little light on the social conditions of the time, though they make it plain that the Seven Deadly Sins were then much in evidence.

One sermon represents the devil as a hunter, the world as a wilderness, and men as wild animals. In the wilderness are four notable lairs: play, drink, market, church. In the first the snare of idleness is set, in the second snares of manifold wickedness, in the third the snare of trickery, in the fourth that of pride, which catches both clergy and laity.

In another, Jeremiah's pit is said to be the depths of sin. In the pit are spotted adders, black toads, and yellow frogs. The first represent slanderers and detractors; the second the rich who use their wealth ill; the last foolish women, dressed in yellow cloth, the devil's covering. "These women who thus love are called the devil's mouse-trap. For when a man will bait his mouse-trap, he binds on it the deceitful cheese, and roasteth it so that it may smell sweetly; and through the sweet smell of the cheese he entices many a mouse into the trap. Even so do many of these women: they smear themselves with blanchet (fine wheaten flour), that is the devil's soap; and clothe themselves with yellow clothes, that is the devil's covering; and afterwards they look in the mirror, that is the devil's hiding-place. Thus they act in order to make themselves fair, and to draw lechers unto them, but they defile themselves therewith. Now, dear men, for God's love keep yourselves from the devil's mouse-trap, and take heed that ye be not the spotted adders, nor the black toads, nor the yellow frogs."

In the alliterative prose homily of *Holy Maidenhood* we have a violent and somewhat disgusting diatribe against marriage. The author emphasises the thraldom, the pains of mind and body, the constant vexations of a wife. His tone is absolutely opposed to

that of the refined author of the *Ancren Riwle*, to whom the work has been absurdly ascribed. The homilist was surely of humble origin, and knew best the homes of the peasantry.

"And what if I ask besides, that it may seem odious, how the wife stands, who when she cometh in heareth her child scream, seeth the cat at the flitch, and the hound at the hide; her cake burneth on the hearth; and her calf sucketh; the earthern pot runneth over into the fire; and the churl chideth." Surely no attractive scene, but probably true to life, like that suggested by the following passage: "Ask these queens, these rich countesses about their manner of life. Soothly, soothly, if they rightly bethink themselves and acknowledge the truth, I have them to witness that they lick honey from thorns. They buy all the sweet with two parts of bitter. . . . It is nowhere near all gold that there glitters, though no one knows but themselves what often pierces them. When it is thus with the rich, what thinkest thou of the poor that are insufficiently dowered and ill provided for, as most all gentlewomen now in the world that have not wherewith to buy themselves a bridegroom of their own rank, and give themselves into servitude of a man of lower station with all that they have. Wellaway! Jesu! What unworthy chaffar! Well were it for them were they on the day of their bridal borne to be buried!"

This presents the dark side of the picture of Anglo-Norman England, the degradation of the gentlefolk of pre-Conquest times. Among the impoverished ladies of better days the priest no doubt found many disposed to follow his counsel and take the veil. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house." This is the text from which he preaches his vigorous sermon. How vastly inferior it is to the untarnished eulogy of Maidenhood by the author of *The Pearl*!

But prose homilies of the Anglo-Saxon style soon ceased to be written, and we have no more to record for a long time. In the library of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, London, is preserved a manuscript volume of English sermons written at the latter end of the fourteenth century, from which has been printed an exceptionally interesting *Sermon against Miracle Plays*. But this brings us down to the age of Wycliffe, under whose influence sermonising took a new turn: the use of apocryphal legend,

amusing anecdote, and far-fetched allegory was then severely frowned upon, the itinerant preachers substituting in their stead plain, straightforward expositions of Scripture texts with contemporary application.

In sermons the foreign taste for rhyme early gained the day. As early as in the reign of Henry II. the Latin septenarius was employed in a conspicuous and influential English poem, known as the *Poema Morale.* The departure from the old methods of poetic writing was accompanied by a change of tone. There is here far less imaginative freedom, less terse and picturesque phraseology, than in the Anglo-Saxon religious poems. In comparison with them, the style lacks distinction, but it is nevertheless clear and effective. The poem, moreover, has some of the old subjective quality, which gives it interest. The author was of an earnest, contemplative cast of mind, and his appeal for holy living on earth, as a means of averting sorrow hereafter, sounds sincere. If not in form, yet in idea he follows the traditions of the English past. He seems to have written in North Wiltshire, where memories of Alfred, Ælfric, and Wulfstan were doubtless still cherished.

In a similar metre was written in the early thirteenth century a comprehensive book of homilies which the author entitled *Ormulum*, "because Orm made it." To judge from his name and the many Scandinavianisms in his language, the author was of Danish descent, and lived in one of the Anglian counties on the east coast, perhaps in the district of Peterborough. He was a Canon Regular of the Order of St. Augustine, and was stimulated to his immense undertaking by another Augustinian canon, named Walter, his brother, he explains, in triple wise—in the flesh, by baptism, and of the same house. His plan involved the production of a complete set of discourses for the services of the year, and he worked it out patiently with obvious self-satisfaction. If bulk was a thing to be proud of, he certainly could plume himself justly, for though the unique manuscript of his book in an incomplete state contains over 10,000 long lines, that

seems to have been only about one-eighth of its original length. His object he explains in the dedication to Walter :

> Icc hafe wennd inntill Ennglissh, goddspelless hallȝhe lare,
> Affterr þatt little witt þatt me, min Drihhtin hafeþþ leneedd.
> Þu þohhtesst tatt itt mihhte wel, till mikell frame turrnenn,
> ȝiff Ennglissh follc, forr lufe off Crist, itt wollde ȝerne lernenn.
> And follȝhenn itt, and fillenn it, wiþþ þohht, wiþþ word, wiþþ dede.

First he gives the Gospels in the mass-book for the whole year, and after each its interpretation and application. In so doing, he insists that he has added nothing of his own except what is necessary for the metre, and in truth he nowhere evinces originality of idea. His simple desire was to make it easy for the people "tunnderrstanndenn" the truth as taught by the Church. His thought accords with that of Ælfric and his Saxon disciples. With the works of St. Augustine and Bede he was quite familiar, while the influence of more recent writers, Anselm, Abelard, Bernard, and the mystics, is distinctly less marked. Few traces of the French dominion appear in his writing.

The length of the work attests sufficiently Orm's industry and untiring zeal. One needs only to read a few pages to discover the careful pains he bestowed throughout in the elaboration of his style. Determined that nothing should be obscure or abrupt, he sacrificed all other merits to this end. Little is left unsaid. Repetition is constant. The style is hopelessly diffuse. With perfect complacency the good monk executed unwaveringly and persistently his allotted task. His verse, though smooth and finished, grows very monotonous. On and on the paraphrase glides like an oily stream. Readers nowadays whom it does not repel it must needs put to sleep. If the spirit of Layamon may be said to reappear in the fourteenth century in the author of *Gawain and the Green Knight*, Orm's is manifest in Gower. And the difference in merit is about equal perhaps in each case. Yet we must not underestimate the value of the poet's work. In the year 1229, by an edict of the Council of Toulouse, laymen

were prohibited from possessing a copy of the Bible except in parts specially authorised; and unquestionably such a work as the *Ormulum* was then a boon to the piously inclined.

To the grammarian to-day the book is of high importance not only because of its length, but also because of its precision. The author was a careful scholar, a philologist, and spelt with scrupulous exactness according to a method of his own, of which the most striking feature is the regular doubling of consonants after such vowels in the same word as were then pronounced short. This method he earnestly enjoined scribes of his work to perpetuate; but we have no evidence that his book was ever copied. The large folio manuscript, of which part is preserved in a mutilated condition, seems to be the author's autograph, written curiously on odd bits of parchment in a bold script. It is one which Junius, Milton's friend, rescued from destruction and presented to the Bodleian.

In the South no cycle of homilies appears to have been written, but instead cycles of saints' lives and legends. In the North, however, in the second half of the same century, was composed a remarkable body of sermons of similar scope and plan to the *Ormulum*, but in short couplets, and far more forcible and interesting. French influence is apparent in various ways —in metre, phraseology, style, and sources. Notable is the frequent introduction of narrative to enforce the teaching of the Gospel paraphrase. Legend joins hands with homily, according to contemporary taste.

Isolated poems of a homiletical character were composed in large numbers in different parts of the land and at all times from the middle of the thirteenth century to the end of our period. To go into detail here is unnecessary. They are all much of a kind. Some are mystical and magnify the love of God and the Virgin. Others move to repentance by emphasising the misery of human conditions and the vanity of the transitory world. Some plead by recalling with tenderness Christ's passion or the Five Joys of Mary. Others awake fear by enumerating the

Fifteen Signs of Judgment, or the Eleven Pains of Hell. Morality is inculcated by expounding the Ten Commandments or the Seven Deadly Sins. Religious instruction is provided in explanation of the Seven Sacraments, the Paternoster, and the Creed. And all this in verse—rhymed theology, not poetry. Most noteworthy perhaps of these short sermons are those entitled *Sinners Beware*, *Death*, *Long Life, Doomsday*, and *A Little Sooth Sermon.* The last-named is a warning to evil-doers, among them false chapmen, bakers, and brewers who give wrong measure; the proud young men that love Malkin, and those maidens that love Jankin; those that come to church to talk of secret love, thinking not of mass, but of Wilkin and Watkin, of Robin and Gilot at the ale-house and afterwards.

Naturally enough, the denunciatory or terrifying sermons of the thirteenth century are far less attractive to us than the persuasive and mystical. Of these latter one of the earliest, in alliterative prose, is entitled the *Wooing of Our Lord*, in which we have the same spirit that animates the *Ancren Riwle*, warm, tender feeling, yielding its finest fruits in devotion. Thus the address begins:

Jesu, sweet Jesu, my love, my darling, my Lord, my Saviour, my honey nectar-drop, my balm! Sweeter is the remembrance of Thee than honey-dew in the mouth. Who is there that may not love Thy lovely face? What heart is there so hard that may not melt at the remembrance of Thee? Ah! who may not love Thee, lovely Jesu? For within Thee alone are all the things united that ever may make any man worthy of love to another. . . . Jesu, my precious darling, my love, my life, my beloved, my most worthy of love, my heart's balm, my soul's sweetness, Thou art lovesome in countenance, Thou art altogether bright. An angel's life it is to look upon Thy face, for Thy cheer is so marvellously lovesome and pleasant to look upon that if the damned that seethe in hell might eternally see it, all that torturing pitch would appear but as a soft warm bath, for, if it might be so, they had rather boil evermore in woe and evermore look upon that blissful beauty than be in all bliss and forego the sight of Thee. Thou art so sheen and so white that the sun would be pale if it were compared with Thy blissful countenance. If I then will love any man for fairness I will love Thee, my dear life, mother's fairest son. Ah, Jesu, my sweet Jesu, grant that the love of Thee be all my delight.

The following conclusion suggests the reason of its composition:

Pray for me, my dear sister. This have I written thee because that words often please the heart to think on Our Lord. And therefore when thou art in ease, speak to Jesus and say these words; and think as though He hung beside thee bloody on the rood; and may He through His grace open thy heart to the love of Him and to ruth of His pain.

It is particularly noticeable how strong everywhere is the tendency to allegory in these religious writings; and in a few instances it took excellent shape. We have already discussed Grosseteste's *Castle of Love* among Anglo-French works. In *A Bispel* we have an interesting allegory of the Redemption. But deserving of more particular mention here is the *Soul's Ward*, a metrical homily on Matthew xxiv. 43: "But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." This is a free treatment of part of the *De Anima* of Hugo of St. Victor, of which another (Kentish) version was appended to the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*:

The master of the house, according to the homilist, is man's Wit (Intellect). His wife is Will. Her servants—the five wits—are reckless; they seek to please the housewife, not the master. In the house is the soul—God's treasure. Vice seeks entrance to murder it. Four cardinal virtues guard it. Prudence is doorkeeper; next are Strength, Moderation, Equity. Each watch has her proper duties. Prudence sends a messenger to the house to arouse its inmates—namely, horrible-looking Fear, the announcer of Death, who is coming with a thousand devils to draw sinners to hell. At the request of Prudence he describes the plan. He pictures the damned in gruesome wise, emphasising the despair of the wretched souls in hideous torment. Each of the sister virtues gives advice. Wit, God's constable, is grateful for his four daughters, guardians of his castle and treasure. Prudence next announces another messenger, Love of Life, who comes direct from heaven, and begs him to tell of God and His abode. Then he describes heavenly bliss. Prudence proposes to cast out Fear, but Moderation points out the value of each messenger's warning, one of woe, one of weal. Fear must depart, however, while Love of Life is within. The whole household becomes subject to Wit. The commands of Wit all should obey, and resist those of Will—performing the ordinances of the four cardinal virtues that he may come to everlasting happiness.

As an example of a homilist using lyric verse for didactic purposes, we may take the case of William of Shoreham, who in the early fourteenth century wrote several pleasing poems on the Sacraments, the Deadly Sins, the Commandments, and the like, including a fine Song on the Joys of the Virgin, translated, it is said, from a hymn by Grosseteste. Shoreham's favourite metre is the septenarius, with variations of one kind or another, now with a short one-accent tag at the end of the second long line, now with middle as well as end rhyme. He uses also the *rime couée* and other minstrel metres. His poems, however, are less mechanical and dull than the subjects might lead one to suppose. He is no ignorant person writing for the populace, but an educated and thoughtful theologian, trying to win the cultivated by ingenious argument. It is not with common men, we may well believe, that he would be disposed to combat, as he does, atheistic ideas: he would not have to convince them of error in "weening that there be no Saviour or other life." If he examines the mysteries of the Christian faith (original sin, the Trinity, and the like) popularly but with subtlety, it was doubtless for the sake of the higher lay classes, who in their worldliness, or because of the new revelations of natural science, had become alarmingly sceptical.

Shoreham probably derived his name from his birthplace, a small village near Otford, a short way from Sevenoaks. He appears to have been originally a monk of the priory of Leeds, and was admitted the first vicar of Chart-Sutton by Walter Reynolds, Archbishop of Canterbury (1313-27). Evidently he was esteemed by his superiors, for Archbishop Simon Mepham, we are informed, gave an indulgence of forty days to all who read his poem on the Deadly Sins; and, it must be said, he was very generous, for the poem is worth reading without any such reward.

In the year 1309 there was a magnificent feast at Canterbury, when Ralph was installed abbot of St. Augustine's. No less than six thousand guests were present, and it is likely that William of Shoreham was among the number. Now on this solemn occasion

some seventy shillings, we learn, were paid to minstrels who sang to the accompaniment of the harp. Thus did the clergy seek entertainment from without; thus they became familiar with the minstrel's arts. Shoreham, imitating their popular methods, sugar-coated theology with agreeable rhyme, and men swallowed it without distaste.

Lydgate, in his *Bochas*, remarks how

> In perfect living, which passeth poesy,
> Richard hermit, contemplative of sentence,
> Drew in English *The Prick of Conscience.*

The Prick of Conscience, which was thus early incorrectly ascribed to Richard Rolle of Hampole, is a poem of nearly 10,000 four-accent lines, and was written in the Northern dialect, though the majority of the numerous manuscripts in which it is preserved belong to the South. The author remarks concerning it: "I reck not though the rhyme be rude, if the matter thereof be good." And, in truth, the poem as a poem has little merit, despite the vigour and earnestness that characterise it throughout, and occasional very picturesque passages. The matter, moreover, is altogether depressing, It is divided into seven parts, the titles of which are as follows: Of the beginning of man's life; Of the unstableness of this world; Of death, and why it is to be dreaded; Of purgatory; Of doomsday; Of the pains of hell; Of the joys of heaven. The author felt that if a reader took this matter well to heart it might make his conscience tender, "and drive it to dread and meekness and to love and to yearning for heaven's bliss, and to the amending of his misdeeds." This was possibly true in the poet's time, but hardly to-day. The modern reader will find in the book many odd notions regarding the universe, some curious bits of folklore and legend, an amusingly definite picture of purgatory, heaven, and hell, with full information of what will happen at the resurrection and judgment-day. But he will find little that throws light on contemporary social conditions, almost nothing original in idea, no sign of humour, no relief. In particular,

there is nothing mystical about it, as we should certainly expect if it had been written by the hermit of Hampole, one of the most productive, and (within his sphere) one of the most popular English writers of his time. He, however, wrote a notable English paraphrase of the Psalms, a manuscript of which, it seems, was owned and used to advantage by the modern commentator, Dr. Adam Clarke.

Various other metrical homilies exist—such as the *Three Messengers of Death*, *How to hear Mass*, and *De Festo Corporis Christi*. The so-called *Speculum Guy de Warwick* is a sermon represented as being preached by Alcuin to Guy, when the latter is remorseful for his sins. But a mere mention of such works

> is right ynow, ywis,
> And mochel more ; for litel heuinesse
> Is ryght ynow to mochel folk I gesse.

Legends and Lives of Saints

The history of legends runs parallel to that of homilies—from Anglo-Saxon times down. They were for the most part produced by devout clergy for the edification of the people, and show a combination of the same elements, only with different emphasis: the homilist illustrated his teachings by examples of righteous doing, while the legend-writer seldom failed to point the moral of his saintly biography or pious tale.

Two kinds of legendary production are to be kept distinct—that prompted by individual desire to exalt one or another saint, and that dictated by general need of the clergy for didactic material in handy form to convey to laymen. The poetic quality of the two kinds is, of course, unequal. It was possible to reach high excellence in narrating a saint's life when a gifted poet wrote under a peculiar inspiration on a favourite theme. There was no escape from dull monotony when a single author tried to compass the whole domain of pious example, or was simply one of a

crowd engaged in the mechanical job of compilation. Chaucer wrote the Life of St. Cecilia with tender sympathy, but he would certainly have wearied as soon of narrating in conventional, predetermined style numerous lives of saints as he did of narrating those of otherwise celebrated men and women. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were the flourishing period of legends in mediæval England, the era of most of the original and independent poems of the class. Before 1300 the saint's life became on the whole a sterile form of literature, being mainly represented in all-embracing cyclopædias, prepared, with purely practical intent, by scholars who were not poets.

While in the time of Cynewulf the lives of Guthlac, Juliana, Andreas, and Elene were recorded in the ancient epic manner as independent poems, later, in that of Ælfric, it became the custom to group various legends together and recount them in rhythmical prose. This latter style was still in favour at the dawn of Middle English production, when saints' lives reappear in literature, showing much the same characteristics as those just preceding the Conquest. The alliterative prose lives of Margaret, Juliana, and Catherine, written in the South (probably in Dorsetshire) about 1200, were doubtless all translations from the Latin, but in phrasing they have the vigour and dramatic force of the Saxon style. As regards contents, they have, of course, the faults of their originals: they abound in miracles of every sort, and paint with precision fearful tortures such as the Inquisition never rivalled. The heroines themselves appear strangely bold. They address their persecutors in language studiously offensive and insulting. They even tackle fierce devils in physical encounters. In their prayers and orations they incline to sum up the whole matter of the Testaments. Both in word and deed they are extravagant and unsympathetic. If one reads these lives in an uncompromising state of mind, it is hard to suppress a feeling of irritation, hard to refrain from ridicule. But that would be to subvert sober judgment of their influence and to let prejudice disturb a consideration of their style. It must, in truth, be admitted that there is genuine

power in this early prose. Would one picture to oneself a devil, let one read this description of Ruffinus, brother of Belial, and how he treated St. Margaret when he appeared to her in person in answer to her prayer:

"And there came out of a corner hastily towards her a wicked wight of hell in a dragon's form so hideous that it terrified them when they saw it. That unseemly one glistened as if he were overgilt. His locks and his long beard blazed all of gold, and his grizzly teeth seemed of swart iron, and his two eyes steeper (more prominent) than stars and gemstones, and broad as basins. In his horned head on either side, on his high hooked nose, thrust smothering smoke out, exceedingly bad in taste, and from his sputtering mouth sparkled fire out, and out went his tongue, so long that he swung it all about his neck, and it seemed as though a sharp sword went out of his mouth, that glistened as a gleam and lightened all of flame. And all that stead became full of strong stench, and shimmered and shone of his infernal shadow. He stretched himself, and stirred toward this meek maiden, and yawned with his wide jaw upon her ungainly, and began to croak and to crane out his neck, as if he would swallow her altogether." Margaret soon recovered from her very great terror, and prayed for aid. Thereupon "the dragon rushed on her instantly and set his sorry mouth, unmeasurably mickle, on high over her head, and reached out his tongue to the fringe of her heels, and made her to vanish into his belly. But in Christ's honour and to his [the devil's] damage, the rood-token, with which she was weaponed, saved her, and became his bane, so that his body burst to pieces amid-hips, and the blessed maiden, wholly unmarred, without any pollution, went out of his belly, glorifying aloud her High Healer in Heaven."

Or again, would the reader learn the reason why such legends were popular, or how they were made known, let him consider the following passage, part of Margaret's petition to God just before she is taken to heaven:

"Whosoever writeth a book of my life-leading or getteth it when written, or holdeth it and hath it oftenest in hand, or whosoever readeth it or listeneth blithely to the reader, O Wielder of Heaven, let all their sins be forgiven them. Whoso in my name maketh chapel or church, or findeth in them light or lamp, grant them, O Lord, the light of heaven. In the house where a woman pineth with child, so soon as she mentioneth my name, hastily help her and hear her prayer, so that in the house be not born no mislimbed bairn, neither halt nor humpbacked, neither dumb nor dead, nor vexed of devils.

But whosoever my name mentioneth and hath it oft in mouth, lovely Lord, at the last doom release them from death." Thereupon it seemed as though thunder dinned, and a burning dove descended from heaven and raised up the prostrate maiden with the rood, and promised to grant her prayer and even more than she asked. Thus spake the Lord: "Wheresoever thy body or any of thy bones be, or the book of thy pain, let the sinful man come, and let him lay his mouth thereon, and I will cure him of his sins, and no evil wight shall dwell in the abode wherein thy martyrdom is written, but all of the house shall be glad in God's grith (peace) and in ghostly love." Now St. Margaret is in Paradise, "where she shineth sevenfold sheener than the sun."

It may seem strange that this "chaste gem" should be the one to preside over childbed, to assist women in labour. But it is a well-attested fact that her aid was often solemnly invoked, even at the birth of royal children. In Rabelais, Garganelle refers superciliously to the saint's reputation in this regard.

Certainly it was by no accident that the three saints so prominently exalted at this time were all famous for maiden purity. The Church saw with alarm how frequently young women listened to the enticing voice of devoted suitors and indulged their fleshly passions, bred of luxurious ease and self-indulgence. Chivalry favoured sentiment, and sentiment opened the door to sin. Against the dangerous wolf of sensuality, too frequently disguised in the sheep's clothing of romantic love, the better clergy raised a hue and cry. They warn the unmarried of the perils along the path of dalliance in which they tread; they try to turn the attention of all to the joys unspeakable of heaven. Now they picture in glowing colours the sorrows of that grim place to which "the primrose path" is said to lead; now, changing from threat to entreaty, from stern to alluring tones, they exalt the everlasting happiness of resting in the bosom of God, so far above the transitory pleasures of union with men that duty is made transcendently attractive, and virtue appears rewarded by increase of natural joy. Mystical, they maintain, fully replace physical ties. For them, the splendour of Paradise cast a shadow upon earth.

The earliest extant French poem (*c.* 1050) is a saint's life, that

of St. Alexis, a moving story preserved in many forms, which, in French and English, verse and prose, illustrate the gradual change in mediæval Christian sentiment, not always to its improvement. The Normans brought to England a firmly established taste for legends, and, as has been pointed out in a previous chapter, they eagerly perpetuated the hagiography of their new possessions, which was much better than their own. The romantic style of their narratives, contrasting with the more epical Saxon mode, soon gained almost exclusive sway. Under the new influences the manner and metre of English legendary poems changed, though their old spirit often lingered. Early in the thirteenth century were composed many saints' lives in the East Midland and Southern dialects, some of which are preserved in later redactions. Notable are a few in simple four-lined strophic form; for example, another life of "Maiden Margaret," treated this time more gently and charmingly, "with words fair and sweet." A very interesting account of St. Gregory, composed after a French source before 1250, has also internal rhyme. Still more lyrical is the legend of St. Eustace (*alias* Placidas, or Isumbras), effectively told in strophes of six lines each. In such separate narratives as these we have perhaps the best products of the type in early Middle English, so far as externals are concerned. Unfortunately, many of the most beautiful legends found no adequate treatment in vernacular poetry, and were familiar to the people at large only in succinct summaries sapped of vitality.

As the number of saints' days increased and the legend grew in popularity as a regular part of ecclesiastical worship, accompanying or replacing the sermon, the convenience of having extensive books of saints' lives, which could be used by the rank and file of the clergy on the festivals duly appointed, became so manifest that in the last quarter of the thirteenth century two native legendaries arose, one in the south and the other in the north of England. The former (in long rhymed couplets) was probably the combined work of the monks of

Gloucester (the chronicler Robert amongst them); the latter (in short couplets or strophes) took shape in the diocese of Durham. The Northern cycle is the more artistic, French influence being more evident in its clear, flowing style. Here legend proper is found combined with pious tale and homily in a way significant of the use to which the book was put. The Gloucester cycle, being a co-operative product, is for the most part impersonal and mechanical. Its prevailing mediocrity is occasionally relieved, however, by a spirited piece like the life of Thomas à Becket, which is full of feeling and impressiveness. The work appears never to have been given complete or definitive form. The large number of manuscripts in which it is found show great variation of contents, order, and dialect. Along with the Northern cycle, it held its own in one form or another throughout the fourteenth century; but both afterwards yielded place to other collections later prepared, and neither was reproduced by the early printers.

Between 1260 and 1270, it appears, was composed a much more important Latin compilation of the same kind, the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine, a prominent Dominican preacher, who was appointed Archbishop of Genoa in 1292, and died in 1298. His work, too, was intended for use in religious service, and was read aloud in churches. It was for its time a discriminating compilation, and merited the extraordinary favour it at once met with and maintained unabated to the Reformation, when, along with the cult of the saints therein lauded, it became the subject of bitter attack. "'Tis one of the devil's proper plagues," writes Luther, "that we have no good legends of the saints, pure and true. Those we have are so stuffed full of lies that without heavy labour they cannot be corrected. . . . He that disturbed Christians with such lies was doubtless a desperate wretch, who surely has been plunged deep in hell." Alas, poor Jacobus, to be so misunderstood!

The *Legenda Aurea* served as the basis of a Scottish collection of legends ascribed to John Barbour, and apparently composed in his old age (*c.* 1380-90). Unlike its sources, it was written from

an independent, personal point of view, for private reading, and has more poetical value than any other legendary in the native tongue. Shortly after Barbour's work (*c.* 1400), appeared the *Festial* of English sermons, "necessary for simple curates and parish priests," compiled by one John Mirk, a Canon Regular of the monastery of Lilleshall, in Shropshire, who also wrote a book on *The Instruction of Parish Priests.* The former, as the title indicates, was for use in public worship, and provided sermons for the chief feast-days, following the order of the calendar. Like Barbour's, it too derived in the main from the *Legenda Aurea*, but was more complete and vastly more popular: the one exists in a single manuscript, the other became one of the most frequently reproduced of mediæval English works. It was still a standard authority when printing was introduced, and no less than eighteen editions appeared between 1483 and 1532. Limited to women saints, and therefore probably produced for the use of nuns, was the collection of thirteen lives made in 1443-46 by a doctor of divinity, Osbern Bokenham, Austin Friar of Stockclare in Suffolk. The author imitated the learned, artificial style of Lydgate, who was then at the height of his fame. About 1438 the *Legenda Aurea* itself (or rather a French version of it) was literally translated into English, and, with certain changes, was twice printed by Caxton.

Meanwhile, a large number of saints' lives had appeared separately in various districts of England, in many varieties of metrical structure, and continuously from 1300 on. Like Chaucer and Barbour in the fourteenth century, prominent writers in the fifteenth, such as Lydgate and Capgrave, busied themselves with this style of composition, writing as artists, however, not as preachers, and adding grace and vigour to themes which in the big compilations had been squeezed almost completely dry of interest by the hydraulic press of didacticism.

There is a wide range in these mediæval legends. Native saints of Great Britain and Ireland appear in the collections along with those of Europe and the Orient. There are no closer limits

in the eras of their flourishing than in those of the worthies of the Monk's Tale. Naturally there is also great diversity in the nature of the narratives themselves: some are fired by poetic conceptions, others are irredeemably absurd; some are human and delicate, others fantastic and grotesque. In general, the older ones are the best. As time advanced there was a degeneration of legendary style. Miracles became more and more prodigious, and the devil increasingly prominent. Extravagance and grossness developed in the process of vulgarisation. Fine tales were often overloaded with extraneous information on history, geography, and science, if not otherwise spoiled by excessive preachment.

The history of legends, though very complicated and bewildering, repays careful study. They clearly contain material of very ancient origin only factitiously or adventitiously brought into their present connection, being indeed a rich mine of myth and folklore as yet only roughly worked. They reveal in their gradual development the unlike influences that moulded the present peculiar compound of our religious conceptions. They exhibit the politic history of the Christian Church in gaining universal dominance, its compromises with paganism and heathendom in precept and practice. Being the most popular religious works of an era of devout Christian enthusiasm, not only in England but throughout civilised Europe, they did much to knit together the people of all lands in a common devotion, a common sympathy, a common hope.

The lives of saints were ever present in the minds of the English people, and not of any one race or class amongst them. Their production was favoured by the combined sentiment of both Saxons and Normans, of native and foreign clergy, of the lowly and the high-born. Saints were regularly appealed to for aid in emergencies of daily life. Their days were celebrated in divine service. Mysteries exhibited them in lifelike performance on the stage. Their acts were commemorated in paintings on parchment, canvas, and glass, in frescoes, stone sculptures,

wood-carving, and metal designs, in tapestry and embroideries—in every sort of art. To saints in large number churches and colleges were dedicated; to their care public institutions and private enterprises were committed. Pilgrimages were made to their shrines in all parts of the world. Their example actuated men and women to lives of austerity and renunciation, to noble self-sacrifice and heroic courage in the performance of duty, at home and abroad, "for Christ and the Church."

We can easily understand why, in the heat of a reaction against popery, Erasmus and Luther felt called upon to denounce the saints' lives because they were then accepted as true by the faithful. But it is less intelligible why there now exist so many Gentiles of imagination "who walk in the vanity of their minds" and refuse to judge legends except by standards of theological truth. Legends, in fact, are little more than the romances of religion, originating and developing in much the same way, as various in nature—and about as reliable in fact—as the poems of heroic adventure with which they vied for popularity. They were composed by the same poets in the same metres, recited by the same minstrels in the same surroundings, read by the same people in the same manner, as the tales of King Arthur and Charlemagne. They flourished at the same time and reflect the same conditions. Mutually the two sorts of narrative influenced each other. They met a similar fate.

Visions

Of all types of legendary homiletic literature none is more interesting than that called the "vision," which, because of its peculiar vogue and influence in the Middle Ages, deserves separate consideration.

Every people that has conceived a heaven or hell has tried to picture with some minuteness what each is like, and imaginary joy and torment the world over show a marked resemblance. Oriental ideas of the state of the good or bad hereafter, like those

of classical poetry and Jewish prophecy, when studied in connection with the presentments of Christian visions, reveal fundamental agreements of thought, even mutual influence. From the death of Christ to the end of the mediæval period apocalyptic productions were continuously enjoyed. Early in our era fanciful writings of the sort were very numerous, but only the Revelation of St. John was accorded a place in the canon of the New Testament. Not until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries did the vision again abundantly flourish; from the fourteenth century date most of those in the English vernacular.

The earliest English visions known to us are those of Furseus and Drihthelm, which Bede records. The former was a monk of Irish blood, a man of holy life and work. In a three days' trance it was vouchsafed to him, under the guidance of protecting angels, to witness much of the bliss of heaven and somewhat of the sorrow of hell, and this marvellous experience he related in full when his soul returned to his body—not without sore affliction, however, for it is said that though the weather was then wintry cold, and he was thinly clad, he sweated while he spoke, as if the heat were intense. This vision had little influence on later ones in England, though it exists in Anglo-French: it is rather an allegorical warning homily than a detailed description of future states. The vision of Drihthelm, on the other hand, anticipates the mediæval Continental style. It presents points of resemblance with the *Book of Enoch*, and the non-Christian *Vision of Thespesius* recounted by Plutarch. Here the doctrine of purgatory is definitely advanced, as nowhere else, outside of Bede, in Anglo-Saxon writings. Again we have the trance, but only a single guide, a being of radiant face and attire. The two companions enter a vast and terrible valley in which the departed hover betwixt heat and cold. There from out the deep darkness appear globes of lurid flames full of human souls. Drihthelm is attacked by fierce demons, but is rescued from their burning tongs by the intervention of his guide. Afterwards he sees the realm of the blest.

Of Middle English visions, that of St. Paul differs from the rest in being the elaborate product of a long-continued growth, not a new or supposedly new creation. Modelled on the *Apocalypse of St. Peter* (a work of the latter part of the first century), it took shape in Greek as early as the fourth century, was expanded in Latin in the ninth, and renewed with much power in the thirteenth. Four different metrical redactions in Middle English have been published, the oldest of *c.* 1300, the latest by John Audelay (1426). Each contains a terrible picture of the fortunes of the damned. At the very gates of hell are sinners suspended from burning trees by various parts of their bodies. Within are a burning cauldron and a revolving wheel, means of piteous torment. Into a fearful flood the wicked fall from an overarching bridge, which the righteous pass unscathed. Souls are depicted gnawing their own tongues, boiling in pitch, suffering from reptiles hung about their necks, obliged to fast when they would eat—in all sorts of torture commemorative of their sins.

Still better known was the *Vision of Tundale.* Over fifty manuscripts of it in its Latin form are extant, scattered throughout Europe, and numerous versions in French, German, Italian, and Icelandic. An English version in rhymed couplets is preserved in several manuscripts of the fifteenth century. This vision, dated in the prologue at 1149, was evidently prepared with the idea of describing in systematic order all sorts of torture previously conceived, and the result has been truly called an "epic of torment." Genuinely fearful are the stinking valley of purgatory, in which is a huge sheet of iron gleaming hot, so that it melts the murderers who are laid thereon and who flow through like wax, then regain their shapes and undergo the same process repeatedly as before; the lake full of monsters spanned by a spiked bridge, not the breadth of a hand but over two miles long, which robbers must traverse with what they have stolen; the huge beast Acheron, which swallows thousands of the covetous at once; not to mention the special abode of the arch-fiend Lucifer in hell, in

the description of which the author passes almost beyond the limits of endurance.

Tundale was an Irish nobleman, handsome and strong, but cruel and vainglorious, who preferred to give money to jugglers and jesters rather than to priests, and of course it was but fitting that he should have a foretaste of his future reward. One day, when in anger from an altercation about a payment due him by a friend, he was struck by an invisible hand and had all the semblance of death from a Wednesday to a Saturday. It was then that he had his vision and suffered some experimental tortures. A similar privilege (so it was deemed) was accorded to another knight, one Sir Owain, a warrior under King Stephen, who, being afflicted by sorrow for his misdeeds, sought a means of absolution, and for that reason ventured into a subterranean cavern near Lough Derg in Donegal, which Christ had revealed to St. Patrick as an entrance to the Otherworld. He saw enough in this brief visit to show him the wisdom of leading a virtuous and pious life on earth. Other knights take warning!

St. Patrick's Purgatory has already been mentioned in connection with Marie de France, who turned a Latin form into French verse in her later years. The Latin author was a Benedictine monk, Henry of Saltrey, who flourished about the same time as Tundale. His concoction gained very wide credence, and various early English and Continental scholars refer to the legend as a real event. It is accessible in three Middle English versions, one of the last quarter of the thirteenth century, and one in the Auchinleck MS. Sir Owain's situation, it will be observed, differs from that of Tundale, who simply sees what he sees in a trance, in that the hero (like Ulysses, Æneas, and Orpheus) visits the underworld in the flesh and returns to tell his tale. The idea of Henry's work was probably suggested by the existence of the cave, which was before surrounded by awesome mystery. Certainly it was long consecrated by the legend to pious veneration. There, it was believed, others might go, see, and conquer the devil's might, if girt with the complete armour of

righteousness and purity. There Calderon placed the scene of one of his plays. There to this day, despite the repeated exposure of the fraud, large numbers of the ignorant congregate on superstitious pilgrimage.

The *Vision of the Monk of Ensham* occurred during a trance from the night before Good Friday to Easter Eve, 1196, when St. Nicholas appeared to him and showed him not only the dismal valleys of the wretched but the radiant plains of the blest. This document was written, it appears, by Adam, sub-prior of the monastery of Ensham, chaplain of St. Hugh of Lincoln. The Latin version was englished about 1482.

The *Vision of Thurkill* tells more strikingly of a revelation by St. Julian to a husbandman of Essex in the year 1206. The author is supposed to be Ralph of Coggeshall. Most interesting is his account of a purgatorial theatre, where fiends sat about enjoying performances by the damned, the special attractions being a proud man, a hypocritical priest, a vainglorious knight, and a corrupt lawyer. The last, it turned out, was one of Thurkill's acquaintances who had died that very year. He acts as in life, pleads and accepts bribes, then is forced to swallow and re-swallow his ill-gotten gain in the form of molten gold. Visions gave their authors too obvious a chance to convey forcible rebukes to their contemporaries not to be constantly used for that purpose. The knight's performance in this "infernal pageant" reminds us of the concluding scenes in the closely-allied *Debate of the Body and the Soul* and Dunbar's *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*, of which we shall presently treat.

Such accounts as these of purgatory and hell being found most useful in keeping the God-fearing, devil-dreading people in the path of rectitude and ever subservient to the Church authorities, they were zealously furthered, and their effect was steadily increased by judicious embellishment, with particular application to cases in point. Undoubtedly they were responsible in some measure for the epidemics of nervous diseases and the abnormalities of life and conduct that were frequent in the Middle

Ages among the morbidly devout. What people in a trance, or under the influence of religious ecstasy, imagined they saw, they could easily persuade their credulous selves and their fellows was in fact true, and there was no reluctance on the part of most to accept as a divine revelation the definite statements they made, which indeed no mortal could deny.

In some of the treatises above mentioned appears a description of the so-called earthly paradise, where Adam and Eve dwelt, and glimpses are given of the Paradise of Revelation. A fuller and incomparably finer account may be found in *The Pearl*, a pure and exalted vision of the happy hereafter, wherein is especially depicted the life of the Brides of the Lamb in the New Jerusalem. The description of the Holy City here closely follows the Apocalypse of St. John, and no contrasts with purgatory and hell are suggested. But an encomium of mystical joys, no matter how beautiful, was not so likely to effect the conversion of evil men and stimulate devotion to dutiful works as dire warnings of eternal woe for offenders; and for this, as well as for other reasons, *The Pearl* was not so popular as works of vastly less merit. Of all English visions it is by far the most original, and as an imaginative creation, the only one among them that deserves high praise. The *Divine Comedy*, of course, is the culmination of the vision type, conceived more grandly and executed with nobler art than any work of the kind written before or since. Nothing like it, we may be sure, will ever be undertaken again; for nowadays, if we send our souls into the invisible "some letter of the after life to spell," the only answer we are likely to have returned is "thou thyself art heaven and hell." We have given over being precise about what happens after death.

Here need only be mentioned other uses of the vision as a literary device: for satire, of a serious or of a burlesque character, as in the *Apocalypse of Golias* and in various short French poems; above all, for allegory of nearly every sort, not only secular, as in the *Romance of the Rose* (which had such a prolific progeny of imitations), but also didactic, as in the *Dream of Hell* and *Road*

to Paradise of Raoul de Houdenc, the *Tournament of Antichrist* by Huon de Méry, or such English works as *Winner and Waster* and *The Vision of Piers Plowman.* The style of allegorical "pilgrimage" reached elaborate development in the first half of the fourteenth century in the extensive trilogy of Guillaume de Deguilleville, narrating the careers of Human Life, the Soul, and Christ, a tedious work which was translated into English in Lydgate's time and forms a sort of prototype of the famous *Pilgrim's Progress* of John Bunyan. The reader will also recall the voices of the dead speaking in the pious tales concerning Pope Gregory's mother, the Child of Bristow, and the Ghost of Guy — together with the Otherworld journey of Thomas of Erceldoun and the exceptionally interesting *Voyage of St. Brendan*, the latter of which appealed to Dante and many others long ago, and still fascinates us, even in no better form than the succinct prose-narrative in the *Golden Legend*, where it found a safe abiding-place.

Books of Edification

Books of edification, religious rather than didactic, yet both at once, were numerous in mediæval England in Latin, French, and English. Those in English have peculiar value for the student of social conditions in the island, being definitely directed against evils then prevailing; and their literary interest is far greater than one would expect.

First may be mentioned a unique and admirable treatise, differing from the rest in the purpose of its production, as indicated by the title, the *Ancren Riwle*, or "Rule of Nuns." This important book was written early in the thirteenth century by a truly lovable old man, at the urgent solicitation of three young ladies of gentle birth, "sisters of one father and of one mother, for their goodness and nobleness of mind beloved of many," who in the spring-time of life had forsaken all the pleasures of the

world and become anchoresses. Their retreat was at Tarente in Dorsetshire; and it has been plausibly conjectured that their counsellor was Richard Poore, Bishop first of Chichester, then of Salisbury and Durham, who was born at Tarente, who endowed the foundation there, and whose heart was buried there after his death in 1237.

The author was strictly orthodox without being a formalist. He rejoices that no heresy was to be found in England in his time. But he implies that there was a great deal of bickering about the rights and advantages of different orders of the Church. Knowing that the nuns would certainly be asked to what order they belonged, he bade them make answer that they were of the order of St. James, for the object of their retirement was to keep themselves "pure and unspotted from the world." Herein, he adds, "is religion, and not in the wide hood, nor in the black, nor in the white, nor in the grey cowl." He distinguishes sharply between the outward and the inward rule, the former being simply the "handmaid" of the latter, to be changed and varied according to every one's state and circumstances. He urges the nuns not to vow to keep anything as commanded except obedience, chastity, and constancy in their abode.

It is noteworthy that only two of the eight books of his admonition are occupied with the outward rule. It was the spirit, not the forms, of religion that this sympathetic, broad-minded ecclesiastic desired to inculcate. Not profound or metaphysical, but straightforward and clear-headed, a man of good judgment, and familiar with the ways of the world, he was an excellent adviser to the young women who sought his friendly counsel. He can be stern, as in the following passage, where he is dealing with the evil of licentiousness, which he vehemently hated, and which must have been then sadly common, even among the clergy: "Foul speech is of lechery or of other uncleanness, which unwashen mouths speak at times. Men should stop the mouth of him who spitteth out such filth in the ears of any recluse, not with sharp words but with hard fists." He begs the

maidens to beware especially of idle priests. "Believe secular men little," he urges, "the religious still less."

People say of anchoresses that almost every one hath an old woman to feed her ears; a prating gossip who tells her all the tales of the land; a magpie that chatters to her of everything that she sees or hears; so that it is a common saying, "From mill and from market, from smithy and from nunnery, men bring tidings." Christ knows, this is a sad tale; that a nunnery, which should be the most solitary place of all, should be evened to those very three places in which is the most idle discourse. But would to God, dear sisters, that all others were as free as ye are of such folly. Those looking out of windows are in greater danger than inmates of a castle gazing from behind battlements at their besiegers. The warrior of hell shoots, as I ween, more bolts at one anchoress than at seventy-and-seven secular ladies.

The domestic and social duties of the nuns are somewhat naïvely indicated. They need not deny themselves all satisfactions; they may keep one cat. Among the things to be confessed regularly are such sins as the following, which end the list: "of play, of scornful laughter, of dropping crumbs, or spilling ale, or letting things grow mouldy, or rusty, or rotten; clothes not sewed, wet with rain, or unwashen; a cup or a dish broken, or anything carelessly looked after which we are using, or which we ought to take care of; or of cutting, or of damaging, through heedlessness."

The author, it is clear, was a learned and cultivated man. He quotes freely and appropriately from the works of important theologians, like Jerome, Augustine, Benedict, Gregory, Anselm, and especially Bernard of Clairvaux. With the Bible he was, of course, thoroughly conversant, and he shows familiarity with Ovid, Horace, and other secular writers.

In accord with the spirit of the time, he was much given to the literal interpretation of symbols and to elaborate allegory. Commenting on the words of St. James: "If any man thinketh that he is religious, and bridleth not his tongue, his religion is false; he deceiveth his heart," the good man writes: "He saith right well, 'bridleth not his tongue,' for a bridle is not only in

the mouth of the horse, but part of it is upon his eyes, and part of it on his ears; for it is very necessary that all the three should be bridled. But the iron is put in the mouth and on the light tongue; for there is most need to hold when the tongue is in talk, and has begun to run. For we often intend, when we begin to speak, to say little, and well-placed words; but the tongue is slippery, for it wadeth in the wet, and slideth easily on from few to many words." In another place we find this graphic illustration: "'The devil,' we are told, 'is a liar and a father of lies.' She, then, who moveth her tongue in lying, maketh of her tongue a cradle to the devil's child, and rocketh it diligently as a nurse."

A significant example of the author's method may be seen in the following parable, which is peculiarly interesting because the situation was no doubt suggested by some chivalrous romance. Obviously, no strict line was drawn between the figures of romance and religion, as was most natural, because both embodied men's ideals and were together ever present in mediæval minds. The Church profited by the fascination of romantic tales and gained a hearing for religious truths by conveying them in similar guise. The young women to whom the writer addressed himself had doubtless, when in the gay world of their girlhood, listened gladly to the lays of Britain, and longed for an experience of romantic love similar to that so enticingly presented there. They were now encouraged to continue their dreams of love; but the unseen object of their affection was to be the Lord Christ.

There was a lady who was besieged by her foes within an earthen castle, and her land all destroyed, and herself quite poor. The love of a powerful king was, however, fixed upon her with such boundless affection, that to solicit her love he sent his ambassadors, one after another, and often many together, and sent her jewels both many and fair, and supplies of food, and the help of his noble army to keep the castle. She received them all as a careless creature, that was so hard-hearted that he could never get any nearer to her love. What wouldst thou more? He came himself at last and showed her his fair face, as one who was of all men the most beautiful to behold, and

spoke very sweetly and such pleasant words that they might have raised the dead from death to life. And he wrought many wonders, and did many mighty works before her eyes, and showed her his power, told her of his kingdom, and offered to make her queen of all that belonged to him. All this availed nothing. Was not this disdain wonderful? For she was never worthy to be his scullion. But, through his *debonerté*, love had so overcome him that he at last said, "Lady, thou art attacked, and thy foes are so strong that without help of me thou canst not by any means escape their hands, so that they may not put thee to a shameful death. I will for the love of thee take upon me this fight, and deliver thee from those that seek thy death. Yet I know forsooth that among them I shall receive a mortal wound, and I will gladly receive it to win thy heart. Now then, I beseech thee, for the love that I show thee, that thou love me at least after my death, if not while I am alive." The king did so in every point. He delivered her from all her enemies, and was himself grievously maltreated, and at last slain. But by a miracle he arose from death to life. Would not this lady be of a most perverse nature if she did not love him after this above all things?

This King is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who in this manner wooed our soul, which the devils had besieged. And He, as a noble wooer, after many messengers and many good deeds, came to prove His love, and showed by His knightly prowess that He was worthy of love, as knights were sometimes wont to do. He engaged in a tournament, and had, for His lemman's love, His shield everywhere pierced in battle, like a valorous knight. This shield, which covered His godhead, was His dear body, that was extended on the cross, broad as a shield above, in His outstretched arms, and narrow beneath, because, as men suppose, the one foot was placed upon the other foot. . . . There are three things in a shield—the wood, the leather, and the painting. So was there in this shield—the wood of the cross, the leather of God's body, and the painting of the red blood that covered it so fair. Again the third reason. After the death of a valiant knight men hang up his shield high in the church, to his memory. So is this shield, that is, the crucifix, set up in a church, in such a place in which it may be soonest seen, thereby to remind us of Jesus Christ's knighthood, which He practised on the cross. His lemman beholdeth thereon how He bought her love, and let His shield be pierced, that is, let His side be opened, to show her His heart, and to show her openly how deeply He loved her, and to draw her heart to Him.

This emphasis on love towards God, conceived in a chivalrous spirit, became characteristic of religious writings. "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," the theme of succeeding centuries, was calculated to arouse and stimulate particularly the women of the

Church to religious rapture. The pious and devout of the other sex, from St. Bernard to Richard Rolle, were meanwhile pouring forth their emotions in "love-longing" to the Holy Virgin. Hermits and solitary clerks humbly adored Our Blessed Lady, and pictured her with all beauty of appearance and grace of courtesy, while their brothers in secular life, like in spirit but unlike in profession, enjoyed reverie about ladies of romance. Gentleness, tenderness, and affection developed with the growth of mysticism.

In the *Ancren Riwle* is reflected not only the chivalrous life of the time, but that of the common people. We see the poor pedlar crying his soap and the rich mercer selling his more valuable wares. We read of "ball-play," of "wrestling and other foolish sports," and "the play in the churchyard." Envious men are compared to "jugglers who know of no other means of exciting mirth but to make wry faces and wrench their mouths and scowl." The author occasionally uses a popular proverb, as "the cock is keen (brave) on his own dunghill"; and in one case quotes the beginning of a popular song, "Ever is the eye to the wood-lie (grove), wherein is he I love," which in one manuscript is given at greater length.

The *Ancren Riwle* is preserved also in Latin and French, and the English version may not be the original. It is, at all events, one of the most valuable monuments of early Middle English prose. In it we find a considerable intermixture of French words, but nevertheless a form of the language near to late West-Saxon. The style is sometimes involved and abrupt, but on the whole remarkably graceful and coherent. We regret exceedingly that more such accomplished Latinists as the author did not have definite incentive to write in English. The Rule exists not only in the original Southern, but also in a Northern dialect, and was modernised in the fourteenth century.

Of the Latin Rule of St. Benedict (Benet), written *c.* 516, we have various versions in Old and Middle English, of the South and North, in prose and verse, more or less literal and complete,

prepared for monks and nuns, from the time of Æthelwold (*c.* 960) to that of Caxton. Ailred's *Regula Inclusarum* was translated into English prose early in the fourteenth century.

A book of edification of the ordinary type is the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (The Remorse of Conscience), by Dan Michel, of Northgate in Kent. The literary merit of this production is far from commensurate with its linguistic worth. Not only is it not an original work, it is not even a respectable translation. The text swarms with mistakes of the most elementary character, so that it is frequently quite unintelligible by itself. We have a manuscript in the author's own handwriting, and in it he gives us exact information regarding the date of its completion, "in the eve of the holy apostles Simon and Judas," 1340. He was, he tells us, a brother of the cloister of St. Augustine at Canterbury, and wrote especially for the uneducated English near his home in Kent, "that they might know how to shrive and cleanse them in this life."

Dan Michel does not say that this work is not his own, and the fact that it is but a translation from the French is a modern discovery. Now, however, it is well known that it is based in its entirety on a treatise usually entitled *Le Somme des Vices et des Vertus*, which was composed in 1279 by Friar Lorens (Laurentius Gallus) at the command of Philip III. of France, son of St. Louis. Lorens belonged to the order of Friars Preachers, and was the King's confessor. Because of the circumstances of its composition the work was sometimes called *Le Somme le Roi*, or *Li Livres Roial des Vices et des Vertus*; and possibly the high station of the writer's patron contributed to its popularity, for no work of edification seems to have been more widely circulated among the nobility in Europe for two centuries after its writing. Several English versions, in verse as well as in prose, appeared after Dan Michel's. In Caxton's time it still held favour, and he decided to perpetuate it (with alterations) under the title of *The Book Ryal, or the Book for a Kyng*.

It is hard for us to appreciate justly the value of a mediæval treatise of this kind. To us it soon grows tiresome, for un-

adulterated ethics we find dull, and no graphic illustrations or suggestive comparisons relieve its pious monotony. But still we must acknowledge that the *Somme* is worthy of praise, for in it the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, as then accepted by the orthodox, were clearly and methodically set forth, with much erudition, moreover, and some elegance. This no doubt commended it to the clergy, and accounts for its frequent reproduction. It is unsafe, however, to estimate the influence of a mediæval work by the number of manuscripts extant. Secular tales were often transmitted by word of mouth so as to become familiar to thousands, though seldom preserved in writing, while faithful scribes were continually copying works of edification which remained comfortably in the monastery or private library, safe from destruction by over-use or exposure.

Chaucer's Parson's Tale was thought until very recently to be nothing but a free redaction of Lorens' *Somme*, and various conjectures were made to explain the divergencies between the two works: it was greatly interpolated by a person whose views were more orthodox than those of the poet; the inconsistencies and faults of arrangement were due to the fact that Chaucer but partially revised his material; and so on. But these conjectures must now be put aside. Though the immediate source of the Tale still remains undiscovered, it has been clearly shown that it was probably an abridged combination of a sin-tract by William Peraldus, a Dominican, who died in 1255, with a work on penitence by Raymond of Pennafort (a friend of Grosseteste's), written as early as 1243, and extraordinarily popular among the clergy from 1250 to 1400. The latter affords not only the general structure of the Parson's treatise, but also a considerable part of its phraseology. The discussion of the Seven Deadly Sins is in reality a digression. Chaucer probably followed closely, in general scheme at least, a Latin or French work based on these sources, though he may have departed from it at will in subordinate features. He was plainly no theologian, and made no pretence of literal exactness.

This meditacioun
I putte it ay under correcioun
Of clerkes, for I am nat textuel;
I take but the sentens, trusteth wel.
Therfor I make protestacioun
That I wol stonde to correcioun.

In these words of the Parson the poet apparently indicates his own attitude towards his work. Though he seems to have been acquainted with the original early in life, there is no evidence to determine when the translation was made. This edifying treatise Chaucer planned to be the last "tale" on the journey to Canterbury. As the pilgrims near the holy shrine, it is fitting for them to become serious, in contemplation of their supposedly pious purpose, and the Parson is represented as choosing this means to put them in the proper mood. Gower, for his *Mirour de l'Omme* and *Confessio Amantis*, utilised some treatise on Virtues and Vices, which resembled *Le Somme le Roi*, and (more closely) a French *Mirëour du Monde*, but which was more amplified than either.

In connection with these works should be examined another didactic treatise of a similar character, the *Handlyng Synne* of Robert Mannyng of Brunne (Bourne), who dwelt farther north in Lincolnshire. We have already become acquainted with Robert Mannyng as the author of a valuable rhymed chronicle, written to familiarise the common people with the facts of English history. This work was not completed until 1338, but then the poet must have been advanced in years. At all events, thirty-five years earlier, in 1303, he had in hand the important poem that now concerns us.

Like Dan Michel's work, Robert's is also a translation from the French, but the French of an Englishman named William of Wadington, whose *Manuel des Péchiés* (note Robert's odd rendering of the title) offers an interesting contrast to that of Friar Lorens. Lorens, we have seen, was the confessor of a king, a man in the most refined and courtly surroundings, a dignitary of high rank, who handled his native language with

ease and elegance. William represents himself as a humble person, born in a little place where was neither "burg ne cité," and acknowledges the truth, that his French is very poor.

If Friar Lorens was a much more significant person than William of Wadington, it was the opposite with their translators. Robert of Brunne is decidedly a more important figure than Dan Michel, more skilled as a writer, more attractive as a man. They resemble each other, however, in their attitude towards their work. No more than Michel did Robert write for clerks (since his matter was accessible to them), but for the common people.

> For lewd (unlearned) men I undertook
> In English tongue to make this book.
> For many be of such manner
> That tales and rhymes will blithely hear;
> In games, in feasts, and at the ale,
> Love men to list [to] trotevale (merry talk);
> That may fall oft to villainy,
> To deadly sin or other folly.
> For such men have I made this rhyme,
> That they may well dispend their time,
> And therein somewhat for to hear
> To leave all such foul manner,
> And for to kunne (be able to) know therein
> That they ween no sin be in.

Robert of Brunne was no rapt mystic, no abstract philosopher. His horizon was limited; but within his range of vision he saw clearly. Evidently averse to pedantry and cant, he spoke popularly with simplicity. Like Bishop Grosseteste, of whom he gives us interesting information, he too delighted in the harping of lays. The story of Arthur and the tales of bygone Britain he was able to recount enthusiastically in his old age. In such a man the unlearned might well have confidence, for his solicitude for their welfare was unfeigned. His attitude towards them was one of kindly sympathy, without chilling condescension or forbidding piety.

The *Handlyng Synne*, unlike the *Ayenbite* and the Parson's Tale, is in verse (12,632 lines long), and an adaptation of its original, not a mere translation. It agrees with these works of Michel and Chaucer in being a book of edification in which a consideration of the Seven Deadly Sins occupies a large part; but it differentiates itself from them by being replete with anecdotes: it is, in fact, a great collection of tales.

Robert omits six of William's least interesting stories, but inserts double the number in more than ample recompense. One of these tells of a miser-parson in Cambridgeshire; another of a Norfolk bondman who reproved a knight for not respecting the sanctity of a churchyard; a third of a Suffolk man who was taken out of purgatory by two masses that his wife got sung for him (in this tale Robert remarks that such prayers are really efficacious only if "the priest be good and clean"); and one of certain dishonest executors of the poet's own neighbourhood, Kesteven, who suffered for their sins (for always "false executors end wickedly"). Thus, by examples of wrong-doing in their vicinity, Robert brought his teaching home to his hearers.

Of all his tales none perhaps is more striking or has a more interesting history than that of the sacrilegious carollers in the churchyard, who, being cursed by the abbot for their irreverence, are forced to continue dancing without interruption for a whole year, without shelter and without food. It is preceded by the following words:

> Caroles, wrestlings, or summer games—
> Whosoever haunteth any such shames
> In church, or in churchyard,
> Of sacrilege he may be afraid;
> Or interludes, or singing,
> Or tabour-beating, or other piping—
> All such thing forbidden is
> While the priest standeth at mass.

Robert is here, as always, practical and definite in advice. He

pleads against profanity, gambling, and going to the taverns; he urges a stricter observance of the Sabbath; he warns his readers against the evils attendant on fairs and meetings. At tournaments all seven sins, he declares, are manifest, and clerks who joust are much to be blamed. Miracle-plays are apt to be "a sight of sin"; they must not be played in ways and groves. Women should not assemble to vie for the garland, which it was customary to accord to the most beautiful; "it is a gathering for lechery, and full great pride, and heart-heaving." They must not indulge in popular superstitions that the Three Sisters come to the cradles of new-born infants to determine their weird; they must not put meat out for false gods, or believe in witchcraft, necromancy, raising the devil, looking in swords, basins, and the like. They should

> Be measurable in all things:
> Of all wisdoms that shall (en)dure
> The most (greatest) wisdom then is measure.

Robert explains that envy is the chief sin of Englishmen, as lechery is that of the French; but certainly, if his statements are correct (and they are abundantly confirmed by the remarks of other writers of this time and century), lechery was a vice terribly widespread in England, even among the clergy. The poet urges women, if they must have a lover, to choose any one rather than a priest.

> But howsoever men preach or spell,
> Of priests' wives men hear even tell,
> Of other wives I will nought say,
> They do not wrong but all day.

He deplores the extravagance of women's dress, the elaborate headgear, saffroned wimples, kerchiefs, trailing skirts, and other novelties; he thought that many displayed their figures lewdly, and were too self-indulgent, that they spoiled their children by heedlessness and vanity. But he approved of marriage:

Nothing Jesus Christ more quemeth (pleaseth)
Than love in wedlock where men it yemeth (keepeth);
Nor nothing is to man so dear,
As woman's love in good manner.
A good woman is man's bliss
Where her love right and steadfast is;
There is no solace under heaven
Of all that a man may neven (name),
That should a man so much glew (joy)
As a good woman that loveth true.

Though not so tensely vehement as Langland, Robert is equally earnest in denouncing the abuses of the time. He too, in pleading the cause of the poor, reproved the faults of the rich. He grew indignant when he saw poor men shivering at rich men's gates, crying for alms, getting sometimes only a beating for their pains. Grasping lords, robber knights, gilded youth, covetous landowners, harsh judges and assisors, deceitful lawyers, usurious merchants, tricky traders, and the like, he roundly denounces. Yet, while he rebukes the rich for their vices, he also points out the offences of the poor, especially their irreverence in church, and their neglect of worship for wanton amusement; he pictures servants wrongfully revelling after their masters have gone to bed, sitting up to cockcrow over their riot.

We get hints, moreover, in Robert's writing of the approaching revolt of the peasants. He is very outspoken. In his chronicle he divides kings into two classes—the fools and the wise, those that did wrong and those that did right. Men in his time were beginning to rebel against the tyranny of the nobility, and to discriminate between noblemen by inheritance and in reality: "Lordings—there are enough of them; of gentlemen there are but few." He too proclaims: "Woe to the land where a child is king."

If thus, in outspoken denunciation of the evils of his time and in sympathy for the masses, Robert of Brunne anticipates Langland, in the form of his work he anticipates Gower. The

Handlyng Synne forms a sort of prototype to the *Confessio Amantis*, inasmuch as in both cases a large number of tales are narrated in exemplification of the Deadly Sins, albeit the wrong-doing is of a different character, and the tales for the most part are of a different style.

The Seven Deadly Sins were a subject which English writers from the times of Alcuin to the Reformation dwelt on with great persistency. In the *Ancren Riwle* pride is represented as a lion, envy as a venomous serpent, wrath as a unicorn, sloth as a boar, covetousness as a fox, gluttony as a swine, lechery as a scorpion. And the numerous progeny of each are named in careful order. Of the little pigs of gluttony, for example, we read: "The first is called Too Early, the second Too Daintily, the third Too Voraciously, the fourth Too Largely, the fifth Too Often, in drink more than in meat. Thus are these pigs farrowed." Or again, the proud are called the devil's trumpeters, the envious his jugglers, the wrathful his knife-throwers, the sluggards his bosom-sleepers or dear darlings, the gluttons his manciples, the lecherous the lowest in his court. In the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* the Seven Sins are described as the heads of the terrible beast of hell, and are elaborately examined in many subdivisions. Pride is here, as regularly, treated first as "root" of the rest. It alone has seven "boughs," while avarice appears with no less than ten. In the Parson's Tale, after the discussion of each Sin, is placed its corresponding *remedium*.

William of Shoreham wrote a spirited poem about the Seven Deadly Sins; with Richard Rolle they were a favourite theme; they served Wycliffe as the basis of a long tract; Gower used them more than once as a mould for his thought. Numerous other writers of less consequence treated them in various forms, sometimes ranging them in struggle with the virtues. More picturesque and original, however, than any other presentation of the theme in the fourteenth century is that of Langland: his realistic portrayal of a representative of each Sin confessing to Repentance is perhaps the most striking part of his admirable

book. To succeeding writers likewise the subject afforded inspiration. Dunbar in a vision saw all seven in hell, each with a group of followers, characteristic in appearance, called forth by "Mahoun" to make a dance, the fiends prodding them on. Of exceptional interest is the account of Spenser, who pictures them very graphically in a procession which the Red Cross Knight witnesses at the castle of Lucifera. He sees her in a coach drawn by "six unequal beasts," on which rode her "sage counsellors": first "sluggish Idleness, the nurse of sin," in a garb like a monk's, riding upon an ass; next "loathsome Gluttony" on a filthy swine; then "lustful Lechery" upon a bearded goat; afterwards "greedy Avarice" on a camel; "malicious Envy" on a ravenous wolf; "fierce revenging Wrath" upon a lion; last of all, Satan on the waggon-beam, urging Sloth with a smarting whip when he stands still in the mire. Shakspere, moreover, had them in mind, especially Pride the chief, when in *Henry VIII.* he charged Cromwell to "fling away ambition," for "by that sin fell the angels." Other places where the Seven Deadly Sins are treated in English works, or where they appear depicted in tapestries, carvings, and stained-glass windows, it is unnecessary to enumerate. Examples enough have been cited to indicate in this regard a striking continuity of literary tradition.

CHAPTER IX

DIDACTIC WORKS

THE literature of the Middle Ages being for the most part produced by clerks, or by persons under their direct influence, the stamp of didacticism is everywhere manifest. Particularly is this true of the early writings extant in Middle English: they were nearly all prepared with the modest purpose of conveying moralised instruction to the ignorant laity. They are seldom original, seldom artistic. Most are but crude translations or adaptations of Latin or French works.

PRECEPT AND PROVERB POEMS

In certain poems, however, of an ethical nature, the temper of the Teutonic race appears plainly, as an echo of the independent, heathen past. The Norsemen possess a precept poem of striking merit called the *Hávamál*, or "Sayings of the High One," in which the god Odin is represented as giving to men practical counsel to guide them in daily conduct. Similar saws, and perhaps similar poems embodying them (in addition to gnomic verses), were current among the Anglo-Saxons. In the twelfth century some of this material was united in an interesting poem and put into the mouth of King Alfred, whose figure, long revered by native Englishmen, had gradually attained to almost mythic proportions. Alfred is here declared to have been the

wisest man that had ever lived in England; elsewhere was ascribed to him the composition of fables of ancient origin.

On the metre and setting of the so-called *Proverbs* (better the *Precepts*) *of King Alfred*, Mr. Stopford Brooke has written in the preceding volume of this series. Here then we need only indicate its substance briefly.

First in the poem are emphasised the duties of all towards God; then those of king, prince, and knight severally, to those under them in authority; after which words of warning are delivered against the uselessness of wit without wisdom, the deceitfulness of riches, and the vanity of life. The following sections deal more directly with rules of personal behaviour. Men are counselled when they have sorrow not to confide in others, but to tell it to their saddle-bows and ride forth singing. Children are not to be trained without a rod, for "better is a child unborn than unbeaten"; yet "a wise child is his father's bliss." Care should be taken lest a man drink until he neglects his speech and wake to repent his words. Wives chosen for their beauty or wealth turn out evil. "Many a fair-seeming apple is bitter within." A husband must anxiously control his tongue, or his spouse will repeat his words when he least desires it. "Woman is word wod (mad), and hath a tongue too swift; though she herself well would, she may it not wield." (We are reminded of the Wife of Bath, who would not spare her husband at their own board, "though the Pope had sitten him beside.") A man must be master in his own house, and keep his wife busy. If a woman is idle and proud, she gets into mischief. She weeps for anger oftener than for good, and refrains from speech to work her will. Cold is usually a woman's counsel. But a good woman is a good guide. Friends should be treated with discretion. One must not tell all one's thoughts, for friends often become enemies. Many simulate friendship to gain advantage. A true friend, however, must be trusted and served gladly. The wise man will keep on good terms with all, but to do this requires self-restraint. A wise man does not say all his will, whereas "a fool's bolt is soon shot." Age comes inevitably with its cares. Let a man not commit his wealth to his family while he lives. The dead are soon forgotten. He is wise who doth well while he is in this world. In the end he receives his reward.

A goodly number of genuine proverbs are extant in a collection of about the year 1200, and others here and there separately (*e.g.* in *The Owl and the Nightingale*, and in Gerald's *Description of Wales*). Most interesting are those attached to precept

verse or elaborated in stanzas in the *Proverbs of Hendyng*. Though this collection was put into its present shape about a century after the *Precepts of King Alfred*, some at least of the material that it contains is equally old. But here the whole is remodelled in imitation of the French collections of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as *Li Proverbe au Vilain* and that attributed to Le Conte de Bretaigne. Instead of the short alliterative lines tending to rhyme, of the transition period, we find stanzas of six lines each, rhyming *aabccb*, followed by a proverb and the words "Quoth Hendyng." The manuscripts show considerable variation in contents; but taken together they make a poem of fifty-one strophes. The last edition of the French proverbs of "le vilain" (the rustic) contains 280 such; yet many more exist. These proverbs, English and French alike, are the product of middle-class sentiment, the thought of plain people crystallised in pregnant phrase, but they represented also no doubt the feelings of the aristocracy, based as they are on universal experience. A couple of stanzas from the English poem will clearly show its nature:

Such man have I lent my cloth,
That hath made me full wroth,
  Ere it came again.
But he that me once serveth so,
And he eft bid mo (more)
  He shall find me unfain.
"Seldom comes loan laughing home,"
    Quoth Hendyng.

Strong (hard) is aught for to get
And wick (bad) when one it shall let (leave);
  Wise man, take thou yeme (heed),
All too dear is bought that ware,
That ne may without care
  Man's heart queme (please).
"Dear is bought the honey that is licked off the thorn,"
    Quoth Hendyng.

Here are some of the familiar proverbs included: "Tell thou

never thy foe that thy foot acheth"; "Many a man for land wiveth for shond (shame)"; "He is free of horse that never had one"; "A burnt child dreads the fire"; "When the bale is highest then is the boot nighest"; "When the cup is fullest then bear it fairest"; "The bet(ter) thee be, the bet(ter) thee besee."

Who "Hendyng" was is a matter of conjecture. In the opening stanza of the poem the author calls him "Marcolf's son," and thus connected him with the opponent of Solomon in a word-combat of ancient and world-wide fame. One old French version of this dispute begins each stanza with "Ce dit Salemons," or "Marcoul li respont." In the Anglo-Saxon poem on the theme Saturn replaces Marcolf; but the latter is mentioned in *Wīdsīþ* as ruler of a race called the Hundings, who were evidently thought of as a people in the far East. To a Hunding, then, a sort of eponymous hero of the race to which Marcolf belonged, and therefore readily called his son, might very well have been attributed a body of proverbial lore of the sort before us. If so, Hunding was transformed to Hendyng under the influence of the adjective *hende* (courteous), as a sort of translation of the French "le courtois," who figures as the opponent of "le vilain" in some collections—for example, *Le Respit del Curteis et del Vilain.*

This is pure hypothesis, but it appears to be the best explanation of a peculiar problem. At all events, it can hardly be, as some assert, that these proverbs were in the beginning attributed to Alfred, and only ascribed to the mysterious Hendyng when the King of Wessex was forgotten. Nor has the difference of name any political significance: the poem is valuable chiefly as a revelation of the people's temper and training.

To the *Precepts of Alfred* is appended in the manuscript another similar poem in which an old man is pictured as sitting beside a dear son telling to him "sooth thews," giving him good guidance for life. This too is put into Alfred's mouth. It is obviously parallel to the Anglo-Saxon poem in the Exeter Codex known as *The Father's Teaching*, and likewise contains advice

about prudence in speech, watchfulness in drinking, care in choosing friends, and wisdom in treating heirs. Several later Middle English poems were conceived in a like spirit. *How the Wise Man taught his Son* emphasises particularly the attitude that the Son should take towards his wife. He is advised to chastise her "with love's awe," the rod being "fair words"; if he rebuke her extremely and arouse her wrath, she is liable to "raise a smoky roof." *How the Good Wife taught her Daughter*, a better poem, is more in the "Hendyng" style: a proverb or precept ends each stanza (*e.g.* "many hands make light work," or "bounden is he that gift taketh"), last of all being appended the recurring words "My lief (dear) child." In another form, the "good wife" is represented as giving her counsel on the eve of her departure for the Holy Land. Here the refrain is more conspicuous. Witness the first stanza:

> The good wife would a pilgrimage unto the Holy Land.
> She said, My dear daughter, thou must understand
> For to govern this house and save thyself from shond (shame).
> For to do as I thee teach, I charge thee thou fond (try).
> With an O and an I, said it is full yore,
> That loth child lore behooveth,
> And lief child much more.

The material of these precept poems appears to be a composite of three elements hard to separate: heathen Germanic experience, pagan Roman wisdom, and mediæval Christian sentiment. In the *A B C of Aristotle* we have a short alliterative poem combining all three, the chief teaching still being to avoid excess: "a measurable mean way is best for us all." According to the disposition of the writers of one or the other of the two chief versions, the advice is worldly and shrewd, or religious and æsthetic.

Exceptionally popular in all periods of the Middle Ages were the *Distichs of Cato* (originally composed in the fourth or fifth century), of which numerous versions remain. This model treatise, revealing "How the wise man taught his son that was

of tender age," was an authorised text-book for "grammar" instruction in schools. In a fourteenth-century version the English text accompanies the Latin and French, the latter being the work of a monk Évérard (*c.* 1150). One stanza will serve as an example :

Instrue preceptis animam, ne discere cesses ;
Nam sine doctrina uita est qꝛasi mortis imago.

Ne cesses en toun corage
De aprendre ke seiez sage
Mout amyablement ;
Kar si cum morte ymage
Est homme en checun age
Ky nul ben aprent.

Further thy will with wisdom,
And cease not for to lerë,
Man's life is like a dead image
Witless if it werë.

We have another English version in rhyme-royal. A translation by Benedict Burgh, Lydgate's disciple, was printed by Caxton.

An interesting collection of precepts from various sources is the book of *Proverbs of Divers Prophets and of Poets and of other Saints*, the usual form being first a Latin quotation, then four lines of French and four of English. The work begins with a paraphrase of David's words, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"; then in the course of the poem are emphasised wise sayings of Solomon, Seneca, Jesus son of Sirach, and other worthies. Similar in conception is the *Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*, compiled in Latin *c.* 1350, put into French in 1410, and translated thence twice into English—in 1450 by Stephen Scrope, "for the contemplation and solace" of Sir John Fastolf, and in 1474-77 by Antoine Wydeville, Earl Rivers. The latter version was printed—the first book printed in England—in 1477, and was so successful as to demand two reprints in a very short time.

Definitely religious, or with a religious trend, are such English poems as *The Saw of St. Bede Priest*, *Ratis Raving*, and *The Folly of Fools and Thews of Wise Men.* The *Sayings of St. Bernard* deals warningly with man's three foes: the world, the flesh, and the devil; while St. Bernard's tract, *De Cura Rei Familiaris*, which was paraphrased in Scottish verse and addressed to a knight named Raymund, gives practical advice on domestic economy.

Dialogues and Debates

From ancient times the dialogue has been a favourite method of conveying scholastic instruction on subjects of science, philosophy, ethics, theology, and myth. Among the Latin Christians it served regularly for *scrutinia* and *elucidaria*, catechisms and sums of theology. Among the Germanic heathen it was a natural form for riddles and flytings. Old Norse possesses an *Elucidarius*, but much more interesting are the various dialogues of the *Edda*, by means of which is effectively presented much information on primitive cosmogonic and mythical conceptions, or (as in the dispute of Odin and Thor at a ford) diverse attitudes towards life.

Not far from 1100, it would seem, was made in English a partial translation of the *Elucidarius* composed but a short while before by Honoré d'Autun,—a work of extraordinary vogue, which was popular enough as late as 1508 to be then printed by Wynkyn de Worde in chap-book form,—and theological dialogues early found favour; but in Middle English are also to be found poems of a more artistic nature, secular rather than religious, which go by the name of "debates." These are usually short, cleverly constructed works, in which representative combatants argue the merits of opposing points of view. Though in them the method of dialogue is essential, and though there is no consistency in the use of terms, we may for convenience apply the name *dialogue* to such works as are definitely dogmatic in tone, and *debate* to those more subtle balancings of contrasted attitude in which

usually no final conclusion is reached. Both are to some extent modelled on Latin clerical poems, but the secular debates were more particularly fashioned after the style of the Provençal *partimen* and its early imitations in French.

Of Middle English dialogues of religious import the earliest extant (*c.* 1200) is a thoughtful (Kentish) treatise on *Vices and Virtues*, in which a Soul makes confession of its sins, and Reason in reply describes the Virtues. In *Ypotis*, written in its present form over a century later, which Chaucer calls a romance, we have a colloquy represented as taking place between a child of that name (who turns out to be Christ in disguise) and the Emperor Adrian of Rome, in which a great deal of cosmogonic and theological instruction is compendiously conveyed. The writer boldly states that St. John the Evangelist first wrote in Latin this "tale of Holy Writ." Ypotis is a late form of the name of Epictetus the philosopher, the original altercation of Epictetus and Hadrian being a heathen work on natural science. Similarly, in a dialogue between the Virgin and Christ on the Cross, and in one between the Virgin and St. Bernard, the story of the Passion is narrated. A *Disputation between Mary and the Cross*, the "fantasy" of a clerk, in forty well-constructed alliterative stanzas of the style of *The Pearl*, presents apocryphal information on the same theme. The *Disputation between Child Jesus and Masters of the Law of Jews* is a realistic, if non-Biblical account of Christ teaching the elders. That between *A Good Man and the Devil* is in sum a defence of the attitude of the Church towards the Seven Deadly Sins against the subtile arguments of the devil, who, disguised as a handsome youth, joins Good Man on his way home from divine service and seeks to pervert him, but who in the end must acknowledge his real self and return a "sorry ghost" to hell. The *Dispute between a Christian and a Jew*, rather a legend than a debate, relates how two learned divines, the one an Englishman, Sir Walter of Berwick, the other a Jew, meet at Paris and make a bet of three tuns of wine as to the possibility of witnessing in actuality Christ

on the Cross surrounded as He was at the crucifixion. The Jew promises to bring this about, and conducts the Englishman through a hill to an Otherworld paradise, where the knights of the Round Table are at games in scenes of rich splendour. But the Christian, being on his guard against deception, refuses to eat or drink, and keeps concealed a mass-wafer that he has been thoughtful enough to bring. When an illusion of the Cross appears, he produces his wafer and the whole place is thereby destroyed. The Jew is converted.

But by far the most impressive of all the religious dialogues is the oldest, the so-called *Debate of the Body and the Soul*, which stands apart from the rest because of its continuous and surpassing popularity, and because in its best form it presents a peculiarly fine example of religious instruction in a vision-setting with balanced dialogue between the opposing sides of man's nature personified. This debate, originally in Latin, is preserved in French and several other languages, as well as in various early and late forms of Middle English verse. The most poetical is that found in a manuscript of *c.* 1300 containing some sixty stanzas. The opening lines have been thus modernised:

As I lay in a winter's night,
In heavy drowse, before the day,
Forsooth I saw a right strange sight
A body on a bier that lay,
Which once had been a haughty knight,
And God cared little to obey;
Lost he had his life's light,
The soul was out, and should away.

When the soul was forced to go,
It turned, and by the bier it stood,
Surveyed the body it came fro,
So sadly, with affrighted mood.
It said, "Ah wellaway and wo!
Wo worth thy flesh and foule blood!
Wretched body, why liest thou so,
That whilom wast so wild and wood?"

The soul "with tristful cheer" contrasts the former and the present condition of the knight, and the body answers its "mournful moan," blaming the soul as the cause of its sorry state. Much mutual reproach follows, until at last a thousand fierce devils appear and carry the soul to hell, torturing it in every wise. The victim is equipped with hell-attire as for a tournament (bearing the devil's burning coat of mail, riding a flaming charger), and is made to ride a course while the demons assault him with blazing brands. Then he is forced to play the part of fox (in his life he had so loved the chase), and is pursued by a pack of keen hell-hounds. Forced at last to blow his horn, he assembles a horde of devils, who hurry him to the abyss of everlasting torment, where he is cast down and locked in. The dreamer is overwhelmed with terror and rejoices at his own salvation from such a fate. He entreats the sinful to repent. "Never sin was done so great that Christ's mercy is not well more."

We recall the lines in *Comus*:

> Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
> Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,
> Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave
> As loth to leave the body that it loved
> And linked itself by carnal sensuality
> To a degenerate and degraded state.

On the other hand, the most interesting and significant of the debates of the Provençal type on secular themes is that already mentioned, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, an anonymous poem, composed about 1220, containing nearly 1800 lines of spirited verse. The writer was a cultivated man, skilled in argument, and he presented the contrasting views of his characters with uncommon skill. The birds agree to submit their dispute to Master Nicholas of Guildford, who dwelt at Portsham in Dorset, a man extolled by both as wise and virtuous, whose merits were greater than one would infer from the recognition he had received at the hands of the Church party. It is probable that the author was one of his friends, who took this means to exalt his repute.

He represents himself as being out of doors one summer's day and as overhearing an owl and a nightingale engaged in strife, each saying the worst things

possible of the other and the best of herself. The nightingale is sitting on a fair blossoming branch of the hedge when she catches sight of the owl on an old ivy-grown stock near by, and stops to express her contempt for the sullen bird. The owl waits until eventide to reply, but then talks back boldly. And, the quarrel once under way, each pours upon the other bitter comments concerning her appearance, manner of life, style and purpose of singing. The owl appears to get rather the better of the argument, and the nightingale has to use subtle shifts to hold her own. At last she tries to win by the clamour of a company of bird supporters whom she summons to her aid, and thereby exasperates the owl to vehemence. A wren interferes to stop the strife and suggests that the case be then submitted to Master Nicholas. This all agree should be done ; but of the decision the author was not informed.

Chaucer speaks of the Owl "that of death the bode bringeth," and of the Nightingale "that clepeth forth the freshe leves newe." But more helpful in interpreting the debate are the words of the poet's contemporary, Giraldus Cambrensis, in his *Topography of Ireland*, who, when contrasting the natures of hawks and falcons, thus moralises :

> May we not compare to the first class of birds those who, indulging in sumptuous banquets, equipages, and clothing, and the various other allurements of the flesh, are so won by their charms that they study only earthly things and give themselves up to them ; and as they do not soar on high to gain the prize by resolute and persevering efforts, their conversation is on earth and not in heaven. Those, again, may be compared to the other class of birds, who, rejecting altogether a delicate diet and all the other delights of the flesh, choose rather, by divine inspiration, to suffer hardships and privations. And, since all virtue soars high, struggling upwards with all their efforts, their aim and object is that recompense and reward for their labours above which the violent take by force.

The contrast between the attitudes of the Owl and the Nightingale is similar. The former opposes permanent to transient pleasures, unselfish to lustful inclination, the earnest life to one of indulgent ease, religious duty to worldly joy.

The poem is probably more than an ordinary display of clever dialectics, for which the mediæval university trained its students surpassingly. It seems to contain a modern, a personal note, revealing an inner struggle of the author with his conflicting

tendencies æsthetic and moral, which has ended in a just appreciation of the value of each, a compromise without prejudice, yielding a character puritan in essence but humanised by cultivation. There were no doubt many other young Englishmen in the early thirteenth century to whom the brilliancy of the French-mannered court appealed strongly, but who were brought to recognise that the sturdiness of their English nature was the soundest basis of personal and patriotic development; many who took sides with the national Parliament against the cosmopolitan Church; who felt it wise to promote the native to the neglect of the foreign speech. If we may see in the author's approving words of Master Nicholas an indication of his own experience, we may believe him to have been a man whose native seriousness had reasserted itself after a period of light-hearted indifference. Noteworthy is his frequent quotation of English proverbs.

The Owl and the Nightingale reminds us of Clanvowe's poem in Chaucerian style on *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, but more strikingly perhaps of the debate of *The Merle and the Nightingale* by Dunbar, where the gist of the two birds' contention appears in the refrain lines: "A lusty life in Love's service been!" and "All love is lost but upon God alone!" It is strange, however, to see Dunbar putting the latter sentiment into the mouth of the Nightingale, whom the earlier writer, recalling the story told in Marie's *Lai de Laustic* (which was accessible to him also in Neckham's *De Naturis Rerum*), properly represented as a seductive bird. Dunbar, it may be said, in his *Dance of the Sins*, describes a scene not unlike that in *The Soul and the Body*. His termagants in hell, we read, "full loud in Erse began to clatter." The Owl long before had betrayed the same prejudice when she said of the frivolous Nightingale: "Thou chatterest as doth an Irish priest."

In another "contention" (taken from the French in the time of Edward I.) the Nightingale again appears, this time opposing a Thrush's views of women. Thus pleasantly the poem begins:

Summer is comen with love to town,
With blossom and with birdës roun,
The nut of hazel springeth.
The dewës darkeneth in the dale.
For longing of the nightingale,
The fowlës merry singeth.

The poet hears the Thrush accuse women of various wrongs (fickleness, falsehood, uncleanness), citing such witnesses as Alexander, Adam, Sir Gawain, also examples of deceived men like Constantine and Samson—whereupon the Nightingale defends them stoutly, and finally puts the Thrush to shame by mention of the Virgin. The Thrush owns her folly in saying ill of maidens and wives, when there exists so preëminent an example of divine womanhood, and agrees to leave the woodshaw where the two birds have been together.

Other debates are the admirable alliterative poems of *Winner and Waster* and *Death and Life* (the former of which has been mentioned among the Visions) and *The Carpenter's Tools*, which unite in disapproval of their master's intemperance—a spirited little poem of the fifteenth century. The writing of debates continued in full vigour to Elizabethan times, when a large number of dialogues, contentions, controversies, comparisons, and the like appeared. Debates served also to develop one sort of drama, illustrated by Heywood's *Wit and Folly* and *Pardoner and Friar*.

In the form of dialogue are Chaucer's allegorical *Tale of Melibeus* (derived ultimately from a treatise of Albertano of Brescia) and that noble work familiar to every cultivated man in the Middle Ages, translated by King Alfred, Chaucer, and Queen Elizabeth, the *Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius.

Books of Instruction and Utility

A very large number of books of instruction primarily for youths and children were written in English, especially in the fifteenth century (but also earlier and later), and usually in verse—books of courtesy, nurture, behaviour, urbanity, civility—etiquette-books for "babes" and dietaries presumably for adults—books

of manners and morals, to serve all sorts of persons of different ranks in different circumstances. These books are in truth just what Lydgate modestly said of his *Stans Puer ad Mensam*: "compendious of sentence" but "barren of eloquence." If one would get a clear idea of social usages in mediæval times, no documents are more valuable; but to the name of literature they have but slight claim. That some knowledge of them is helpful in understanding the training and *milieu* of characters in fiction as well as in real life, every reader of Chaucer is aware.

The pattern of good manners among the Canterbury pilgrims was the Prioress ("in curteisye was set ful much her lest"); but the Squire likewise was a model of the best training afforded a noble youth. For such as he were prepared books of guidance to refinement and polish that contrast markedly with the poems of plain salutary counsel for humbler folk. We understand better, after reading both types, the reasons for the diverse predilection of the mediæval high and low, the questions of their daily solicitude, the quality of their ideal standards. They reveal, on the one hand, the workaday lives, the dull duties, the practical vexations, the exterior roughness, the crude simplicity, of ordinary folk; and on the other, the adventurous careers, the spectacular pomp, the luxurious ease, the elaborate sophistication, the "vain confabulations" of the courtly classes.

The trouble with treating courtesy-books as indicative of actual conditions in England at any given time is that they are seldom native in origin: they seldom contain other than long-perpetuated advice. French books of manners and meals, of the ways of chivalry and domestic economy, abounded in the fourteenth century. Noteworthy are similar treatises produced in Italy from the time of Brunetto Latini, Bonvicino and Barberino in the thirteenth century or a little later, to that of the accomplished Castiglione, who was knighted by Henry VIII.

The Courtier is a book the reading of which would surely profit every man. The same may perhaps be said of certain works, much less attractive in style, which were particularly

prepared as rules for princes, such as the *Secretum Secretorum*, attributed to Aristotle, and the *De Regimine Principum* of Egidio Colonna, versions of which are extant from the hands of Lydgate and Occleve, undertaken under princely patronage. Of the former we have three redactions in English prose, besides the metrical one of Lydgate and his follower Burgh. The book itself has an interesting history: first perhaps compiled in Syriac in the eighth century, it appears to have been translated into Arabic for some Mohammedan ruler; it was put into Latin by Philip of Paris in the thirteenth century, and this redaction was reproduced in French. Sir William Forrest treated the same material in his *Poesye of Princely Practise* written for the benefit of Edward VI.

Requiring but slight attention in such a book as this, yet necessary to note, are the numerous books of utility and pseudo-science dating from the fourteenth century on: books of cookery and carving; books of hunting and fowling, of heraldry and precedence; books of medicine and surgery, of "quintessence" and astrology; books of geography and travel; a translation of Palladius on husbandry—and the like. These are all interesting in their way, and some of them excessively quaint and curious; but their purpose being almost wholly pedagogic, and their information not helpful to moderns, we leave them with this reference "in passing." From the time of Edward I. dates a *Fragment on Popular Science*, several hundred long lines in the metre of Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle, which deserves more notice as the first attempt of the sort in English. It deals with supposed facts of astronomy, meteorology, physical geography, and physiology, the source not having been as yet determined. Chaucer, it will be remembered, wrote an *Astrolabe* for his "little son" Lewis (whoever he may have been).

If one would get an idea of mediæval science of every kind, the most compendious book of information on the subject is the *De Proprietatibus Rerum* of Bartholomew, an English Franciscan who flourished about the middle of the thirteenth century, con-

temporary with Roger Bacon and Thomas Aquinas—the result, it would seem, of the University lectures that this learned professor of theology at Paris gave to numerous young friars, who perpetuated their master's ideas wherever they travelled and preached. This work, very popular in all parts of Europe for a long time, was turned into clear English in 1397 by John of Trevisa, the translator of Higden, who was chaplain of Sir Thomas, Lord of Berkeley. It was printed as early as 1495. Written thus in the age of Dante, translated in that of Chaucer, and printed before and in the time of Shakspere, it throws most valuable light on many antiquated notions entertained by all three of these great writers and by a host of others, their lesser contemporaries. Here we get a succinct account of mediæval beliefs concerning astronomy, physiology, physics, chemistry, geography, and natural history, as well as all sorts of side-lights on conditions of early society. The author gathered his information from various authorities, such as Dionysius the Areopagite for heaven and the angels; Aristotle for physics and natural history; Pliny, Isidore of Seville, and Arab writers for astronomy; Constantinus Afer for medicine; indeed, from every ancient or modern scientific treatise accessible. From bestiaries and lapidaries he drew extensively to explain the properties of gems and animals.

Not because of their significance in any serious way, but because of their quaint curiosity, and incidentally to illustrate John's style, may be given his brief descriptions of a maid and a cat, which we are at liberty to regard as the result of personal observation.

Of a Maid. Men behoove to take heed of maidens: for they be tender of complexion; small, pliant, and fair of disposition of body; shamefast, fearful, and merry. Touching outward disposition they be well nurtured, demure and soft of speech, and well ware of what they say, and delicate in their apparel. And for a woman is more meeker than a man, she weepeth sooner. And is more envious, and more laughing, and loving; and the malice of the soul is more in a woman than in a man. And she is of feeble kind, and she maketh more lesings (untruths), and is more shamefast, and more slow in working and in moving than is a man.

Of the Cat. He is a full lecherous beast in youth, swift, pliant, and merry, and leapeth and rusheth on everything that is before him; and is led by a straw, and playeth therewith; and is a right heavy beast in age and full sleepy, and lieth slyly in wait for mice; and is aware where they be more by smell than by sight, and hunteth and rusheth on them in privy places; and when he taketh a mouse, he playeth therewith, and eateth him after the play. In time of love is hard fighting for wives, and one scratcheth and rendeth the other grievously with biting and with claws. And he maketh a ruthful noise and ghastful, when one proffereth to fight with another; and hardly is hurt when he is thrown down off an high place. And when he hath a fair skin, he is as it were proud thereof, and goeth fast about; and when his skin is burnt, then he bideth at home, and is oft for his fair skin taken of the skinner, and slain and flayed.

If our ideas of astronomy and chemistry and physics have changed, if our geographical knowledge has increased, if we are less disposed to seek symbols in history and natural phenomena, our observation of human and animal peculiarities is no keener than of yore. Nor is our patriotism greater. We read with pleasure the description of England, "beclipped all about by the sea," which ends as follows:

England is a strong land and a sturdy, and the plenteousest corner of the world, so rich a land that scarcely it needeth help of any land, and every other land needeth help of England. England is full of mirth and of game, and man ofttimes able to mirth and game, free men of heart and with tongue, but the hand is more better and more free than the tongue.

CHAPTER X

SONGS AND LYRICS

Lyrical poetry is of many kinds, and many productions that might be included under that heading have already been treated in previous chapters. There still remain, however, for consideration a goodly number of short poems which might be collected into a mediæval "Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics," the basis of selection being, as in Palgrave's anthology, that "each poem shall turn on some single thought, feeling, or situation."

Middle English lyrics may be roughly divided into three classes—ecclesiastical, popular, and courtly; the production in general of monks, minstrels, and secular clerks. Yet no such division is permissible that does not recognise the inevitable transgression of limits; for monks were clerks, and clerks were minstrels, and all sorts of clergy might be courtiers by merit for the nonce, or always by reason of birth. Moreover, ecclesiastics were often lewd while laymen were devout, and in both classes were poets who occupied themselves now with religious, now with secular themes. Furthermore, no style of lyrical writing was without influence on the others. Ecclesiastical poems favour the metres of the Latin hymns and chants; popular songs are generally accompanied by refrains; courtly lays are apt to exhibit the complications and conventions of Southern art. But it is striking how the various methods encroach each on the other's special domain. The songs of churchmen often glow with the

sensuousness of amorous troubadour verse, while those of courtiers as often betray the gleeman's love of nature and breathe the wholesome atmosphere of out-of-doors. Sometimes to a purely artificial product will be added a refrain from a minstrel lay. Occasionally in the same metre and in much the same words, thoughts of contrasting kind will be conveyed. In general, Middle English lyrics are characterised by a certain earnestness, warmth, and healthy vigour that give them a peculiar quality as opposed to similar Continental productions: what they lack in polish, they make up for in sincerity. All show in form a definite departure from Anglo-Saxon models. Many, to be sure, especially those from the West Midland district, evince a tendency to alliteration; but this is used as contributive ornament rather than as a method of structure. The lyrics of the period reached their finest form in artistically fashioned stanzas, presenting a wide variety in disposition of rhyme and length of line. These are the direct prototypes of much of modern English verse.

Just as the winsome spirit of legend casts a glamour over the first composition of religious verse in Anglo-Saxon times, so it seems to hover over its new birth five hundred years later, when it revisits for a moment the scenes of past achievements. Again it came to Whitby, and again a man of lowly origin was inspired by a heavenly vision to sing in praise of God. The story of St. Godric, like that of Cædmon, deserves to be held in memory.

Of him it is related that one day, when the sun was shining bright in the heavens, he lay bowed in earnest prayer before the altar of the Virgin, when all at once Our Lady appeared to him, accompanied by Mary Magdalen, both very beautiful, with raiment shining white, in figure not large, resembling maidens of tender years. The petitioner was possessed by joy, but dared not move. Soon, however, the two drew near with slow steps, and Our Lady spoke. "We will," said she, "protect thee to the end of the world, and seek to support thee in every need." Godric threw himself at her feet, and confided himself to her care. Thereupon the holy ones laid their hands on his head and stroked the hair from his temples, and the whole place was filled

with sweet fragrance. Next the mother of mercy taught him a new song, which she sang before him as before a pupil, and he sang it after her and remembered it all the days of his life. When he had the text and melody fast in his mind, she bade him, as often as pains plagued him, or temptation, or vexation threatened to overcome him, to sing the same, giving him this assurance: "From now on, if thou wilt call on me with this prayer, thou shalt have me at once as a propitious helper." Then, after making repeatedly over his head the sign of the cross, she and her companion vanished, leaving behind them the most wonderful fragrance. This tale, with tears flowing from his eyes, Godric more than once related to Reginald, monk of Durham, by whom it was recorded, together with the text of the song, as follows:

Sainte Marie, . . . uirgine,
Moder Jesu Cristes Nazarene,
Onfo, scild, help thin Godric,
Onfang, bring hehlic with thee in Godes ric.

Sainte Marie, Cristes bur,
Maidenes clenhad, moderes flur,
Dilie mine sinne, rixe in min mod,
Bring me to winne with self God.

"St. Mary, Virgin, mother of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, receive, shield, help thy Godric; embrace and bring him aloft with thee into the kingdom of God.—St. Mary, Christ's abode, pearl (cleanness) of maidens, flower of mothers, remove my sin, rule in my mind, aid me to reach to God Himself."

Reginald gives detailed information regarding the life of Godric, as apprentice, pilgrim, and hermit, from his birth in Norfolk to his death (in the year 1170) at Durham. We possess parts of two other songs attributed to him, one composed on the occasion of the appearance to him of his dead sister, who in answer to his prayer was allowed to return to earth to assure him of her salvation, and another concerning a vision that he had of St. Nicholas, whom he saw with angels singing at the grave of Christ. He joined in their song, which St. Nicholas commended.

If we examine Godric's song to the Virgin, we observe three noteworthy facts: that it is in stanzas, is embellished by rhyme, and is fired by mysticism—that, in fact, it anticipates in striking features the style and spirit of religious lyrics for the next three hundred years. Very similar are the ecstatic effusions

attributed to Richard Rolle, who in the fourteenth century followed St. Godric's manner of life.

But it is not necessary to come down so late to find parallels to his prayer-poem. Only a little after Godric's time (*c.* 1210) was written *A Good Orison of Our Lady*, a "lay" skilfully wrought in some 170 long lines of fluent verse, "found," we are informed, by a monk, possibly first in Latin.

It begins: "Christ's mild mother, St. Mary, light of my life, my dear lady —to thee I bow and bend my knee and all my heart's blood offer to thee." The poet declares that he will sing love-songs to her incessantly, for she has released his soul from torment. She is bright and blissful above all women, their "blossom" before the throne of God. High is her throne above the cherubim; the angels make joyful music in her presence; she dispenses the richest gifts to her friends, ennobles them in a land of indescribable mirth, from golden bowls pours out to them eternal life with angelic joys. Her company are all radiant in white ciclatouns and wear golden crowns—red as roses and white as lilies, gleeful in the presence of their Lord and His queen. She is the well-spring of life; heaven is full of her bliss, the earth of her mercy. The poet is in servitude for her love; for it he has forsaken all that was dear to him. He implores her, his "lief sweet lady," to have pity on him, to shield him from sorrow, and heal his wounds; for in her is all his trust, after her dear Son.

Many are the orisons and salutations to Our Lady, the Ave Marias short and long, separate and in sequences, original and translated, that were written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. An early example of the sort, simpler yet more dignified than most, is one beginning thus:

> Blessed be thou, Lady, full of Heavenës bliss,
> Sweet flower of Paradise, mother of mildëness,
> Pray Jesu thy Son that He me rede and wiss (guide)
> So my way for to go, that He me never miss.

The metre, it may be observed, is the familiar long line with seven accents and a cæsura after the fourth, found most accurately in the *Ormulum*, which by division into parts became what is known as the "Common Metre." With it should be compared that of another charming poem of the first half of the thirteenth

century, from the same West Midland district, where French rhymes in the second half-line blend with the English of the first.

Maiden, mother mild, *oiez cel oreysoun ;*
From shame thou me shield, *e de ly malfeloun.*
For love of thy child, *me menez de tresoun ;*
I was wod and wild, *ore su en prisoun.*

Thou art fair and free, *e plein de doucour ;*
Of thee sprang the blee, *ly souerein creatour ;*
Maiden, beseech I thee *vostre seint secour,*
Meek and mild be with me, *per la sue amour.*

Another, with English and Latin combined, in a modified stanza, is still more melodious :

Of one that is so fair and bright, *velut maris stella,*
Brighter than the day is light, *parens et puella,*
I cry to thee, thou look on me.
Lady, pray thy Son for me, *tam pia,*
That I may come to thee, *Maria.*

All this world was forlorn, *Eva peccatrice,*
Till our Lord was y-born, *de te genetrice.*
With *ave* it went away.
Thuster (dark) night and cometh the day *salutis.*
The well springeth out of thee, *virtutis.*

Lady, flower of allë thing, *rosa sine spina,*
Thou bore Jesu, Heaven's king, *gratia divina,*
Of all thou bearest the prize.
Lady, queen, of paradise, *electa.*
Maiden mild, mother, *es effecta.*

A *stabat mater* of uncommon tenderness is extant in six-line stanzas, rhyming *aabccb.* In stanzas of eight lines the "five joys" of the Virgin were sung. And various other short poems full of "love-longing" attest the sentiment of tender devotion that she inspired. At the same time were frequent mystical love-songs in praise of Christ "so mild and sweet." Most notable of these is the well-known *Love Rune* of the Franciscan Thomas of

Hales, composed at the instance of a young lady, in order that she might by it learn of the best lover to take.

The author points out that worldly affection is false and fickle, that famous knights have passed away like the wind's blast, fallen like meadow-grass.

None is so rich, none is so free,
That he shall not hence soon away,
Never may it his warrant be,
Gold nor silver, estate, array,
No matter how swift, he may not flee.
Nor defend his life any day.
Thus is this world as thou mayst see,
Even as the shadow that glides away.

He who loves this fleeting world is blind. Man fades as a leaf on a bough. His love is inconstant, untrue.

Where is Paris, where Heleynë,
That were so bright and fair of blee,
Tristram, Amadas, and Ydeynë,
Ysolt, and such as she,
Hector with his sharp meynë,
And Cæsar, rich of worldës fee?
They are glidden out of the reynë,
As the shaft is from the clee (sling)

It is as if they had never lived. All their heat is turned to cold. The only worthy lover is Christ. If she only knew His good ways, how fair and bright He is of hue, how glad of cheer and mild of mood, how lovesome and how true of trust, she would not hesitate to yield herself to Him. He is the richest in the whole world. Even King Henry bears no comparison to Him. He is eager for the maiden's love. He asks no dowry. On the contrary, He will array His beloved in incomparable attire, take her to a dwelling fairer than ever Solomon wrought, built on a sure foundation, where all is bliss. She shall there play with angels in a sweet accord, and rejoice in Christ's sight. He has given her a treasure greater than silver and gold, which she must carefully guard—her virginity, a gem-stone most precious, the jewel of greatest price, "set in the gold of heaven," which shineth above all in heaven's bower. While she preserves it pure, she is sweeter than any spice. Christ is the lover for her to choose.

The author begs her to learn his song by rote and teach it to other

maidens. When she sits in longing, let her sing it with sweet voice, and do as it bids. He prays Almighty God to let her come to His bridal-chamber in heaven.

"Jesu, Lover of my soul" is the keynote of many another devout song of the thirteenth century. Two, entitled *Dulcis Jesu Memoria* and *Sweet Jesu, King of Bliss*, in stanzas of four lines each with single rhyme, are fashioned on a Latin model. The former (containing forty-nine stanzas) is particularly impregnated with mysticism. More vague and rapturous is the emotion here expressed. The author's soul is "Jesus' spouse." He begs to be taught His love-song "with sweet tears ever among." Of the same mystical "love-tears with sweet mourning," which we learn that Christ demands, Rolle was once again to write with like extravagant ecstasy.

More attractive to us are the several graceful songs in which we hear a truly subjective note, where a definite impression is evoked by a suggestive scene, the temper being rather that of the secular lyric. Thus, for example, one poet begins:

When I see blossoms spring,
  And here glad foulës song,
A sweet love-longing
  Enters my heart anon,
A love forever new,
That is so sweet and true,
  It gladdeth all my song.
I wot all mid iwys
My joy and eek my bliss
  To Him alone belong.

He sees the Christ on the cross, and the sight moves him to earnest devotion. We find the same tone in a poem, "I sigh when I sing," in six ten-line stanzas marked by freshness and vigour.

A charming *Song on the Passion* begins thus:

Summer is come and winter gone,
  The days begin to grow long
And the birdës every one
  Make joy with song.

Still strong care bindeth me
Despite the joy that's found
in land,
All for a child
That is so mild
of hand.

Thoughts on the transitoriness of worldly pleasure and contemplation of the hereafter are suitably prepared for by the following stanza which begins a fine reflective poem:

Winter wakeneth all my care,
Now the leaves have waxëd bare;
Oft I sigh and sorrow sare
When it cometh in my thought
Of our worldly joy, how it goeth to nought.

Perhaps the best of all, however, is another song by a West Midland poet which is extant in a Southern form:

Now shrinketh rose and lily flower,
That whilom bore the sweet savour,
In summer, that sweet tide;
There is no queen so strong in power,
There is no lady so bright in bower
That death shall not by glide.
Whoso will lust of flesh forego
And Heaven's bliss abide,
On Jesus he his thought bestow,
Christ with the pierced side.

After this introduction, the author tells straightway of his feelings one morning when, leaving Peterborough in gay mood, he begins to think of his folly and prays the Lord to save him from "the loathsome house wrought for the devil." He sees that he is to gain sweetness and soundness of spiritual nature by penance, which is the medicine of the Virgin, the best leech in the world. All sick should seek her and be brought to bliss.

More plainly personal is the prayer to his "high lord," his "trusty king," of an old man in "the sere, the yellow leaf," who laments the change of his estate in the spirit of the Anglo-Saxon *Wanderer*:

Once he was gay and proud, now weak and joyless, "little loved and less counted." His fast horses, his fine attire, his money are all gone. "When I see steeds stiff in stall and I go halting in the hall," so he complains, "my heart begins to sink." He is loath where once he was lief. Those who once provided him with clothes, now turn away as if they were wroth. Such is evil and eld (old age)!

Evil and eld and other woe
Follow me so fast,
Meseems my heart shall break in two;
Sweet God, why shall it so?
How may it longer last?

While his life was evil, gluttony was his gleeman, pride his playmate, lechery his laundress (with her is gab and guile), covetousness bore his keys, envy and hatred were his comrades, liar his latimer, sloth and sleep his bediner (bedmaker). He repents his past, apostrophises "dreadful death," and prays for succour. In the end he recognises the best remedy for his misery and looks for the light of Heaven.

Possibly by the same writer is a longer poem, entitled *Maximion*, likewise in strophes of varying length, and on the same general theme, the change of earthly conditions and the transitoriness of the joys of the world. Maximian's poems are mentioned in the Chaucerian *Court of Love*, and Skelton, connecting him with Seneca and Boethius in the *Garland of Laurel*, speaks of his "mad ditties how doting age would jape with young folly." Certain lines in the Pardoner's Tale are imitated from the first Elegy of Maximian.

From verse of this mournful character one turns with relief to the lightsome lyrics of the secular clerks, impregnated with the spirit both of the native folk-song and the courtly poetry of France. Of the folk-song proper we have no good example left unless it be the familiar one of the Cuckoo, wherein the advent of summer is robustly sung:

Summer is y-comen in, loudë sing cuckow!
Groweth seed and bloweth mead and springeth the woodë now.
Sing cuckow!

Ewe bleateth after lamb, loweth after calfĕ cow,
Bullock starteth, bucke verteth, merryĕ sing cuckow!
Cuckow, cuckow!
Well singest thou cuckow: ne swick (cease) thou never now.

This song is particularly interesting because the music to which it was sung is preserved in a codex (Harleian 978) written in 1226 by John of Fornsete, a monk of Reading, in Berkshire, the founder of the so-called "First English School" of music. It is described as "the earliest secular composition in parts which has hitherto been discovered—a Canon, or Round, for six voices, now known as the *Reading Rota*; as melodious as an Italian *Fa la* of the best period, and, considering the date at which it was written, wonderfully free from contrapuntal defects."

Refrains from folk-songs seem to have been adopted by trained writers to accompany their art-lyrics, which were probably composed with popular airs in mind. To a charming poem of the troubadour style, for example, is attached the following refrain:

Blow, northern wind,
Send thou me my sweeting,
Blow, northern wind, blow, blow, blow!

The author of this poem offers a very graceful, somewhat allegorical, description of his lady. He appeals to Love for counsel in trouble, and is advised to plead with his sweetheart and implore her to relieve his pain. Thus he concludes:

For her love I cark and care,
For her love I droop and dare (decline),
For her love my bliss is bare,
And all I wax wan.

For her love in sleep I slake,
For her love all night I wake,
For her love mourning I make,
More than any man.

A refrain, more intimately connected with the text, occurs in the exquisite song of *Alysoun*:

Between March and April,
When spray beginneth to spring,
The little fowl hath her will
In her tongue to sing.
I live in love-longing
For seemliest of allë thing.
She may me bliss bring.
I am in her bandoun.[1]
A hendy hap I have yhent,[2]
I wot from Heaven it is me sent,
From all women my love is lent,[3]
And light[4] on Alysoun.

Very graceful likewise are the six-line stanzas of another short poem in which is expressed the anguish of a lover who dares not reveal his love. The poet thus concludes:

I would I were a thrustlecock,
A bountyng,[5] or a laverok,[6]
Sweet bride!
Between her kirtle and her smock
I would me hide.

Giraldus Cambrensis, in his *Gemma Ecclesiastica*, tells an amusing anecdote of a priest of Worcester, who, having the refrain of a similar song ringing in his ears, chanted at the altar: "Sweet lemman, thine ore (mercy)," instead of *Dominus vobiscum*; and the bishop forbade that profane song ever to be sung again in the diocese. Gerald attests the fact that many other lyrics of the sort were popular in his day.

In *Johon* we have a carefully-written song in five stanzas of eight epic long lines with the same rhyme, followed by a couplet with a different one. Here is also fulness of alliteration, such as was favoured in the West Midland district where the poem was written. The poet compares the qualities of his lady with various sorts of precious stones, flowers, birds, spices, and with certain

[1] Power. [2] A pleasant thing has happened to me.
[3] Turned. [4] Alighted. [5] Blackbird. [6] Lark.

notables of story. By the same author seems to have been written a clever song in tail-rhyme strophe beginning "With longing I am led," in which he tells of his amorous madness, and imagines that all heaven would be in his lady's embrace—a sentiment expressed in another poem of similar nature and metre concerning *The Beauty of Ribbesdale*, who, to judge from the poet's phrases, was beyond compare in feature and form. One can but feel that one is immersed in "the chronicle of wasted time," reading descriptions of "the fairest wights," "and beauty making beautiful old rhyme in praise of ladies dead and valiant knights."

In stanzas of four long lines with the same rhyme are preserved two love-complaints, probably by one author, of the North-East Midland. In one the lover apostrophises his lady thus:

> When the nightingale singeth, the woods waxen green,
> Leaf and grass and blossom springeth, in Averil, I ween,
> And love is to my hearte gone, with a spear so keen,
> Night and day my blood it drinketh, my heart doth to teen (grieve).
>
> I have loved all this year, that I may love no more,
> I have sighed many a sigh, lemman, for thine ore (grace),
> To me is love no nearer, and that me rueth sore,
> Sweet lemman, think of me, I have loved thee yore.

The other complaint is characterised by being in dialogue, after the following induction:

> My death I love, my life I hate, for a lady sheen,
> She is bright as day's light, that is in me well seen,
> All I fall as doth the leaf in summer when it is green,
> If my thought helpeth me nought, to whom shall I me mene.
>
> Sorrows and sighs and dreary mood bindeth me so fast,
> That I ween to walke wod, if it still longer last;
> My sorrow, my care, all with a word she might away cast;
> What helpeth thee, my sweet lemman, my life thus for to waste.

The dialogue begins with the lady's reproachful warning.

"Be off, thou clerk, thou art a fool, with thee I will not chide. Never wilt thou see the day when I will love thee. If thou art taken here, shame will betide thee." In return, the clerk pleads despairingly: it will be great shame to her if he dies for love of her. Again she reproves him for a fool to be where he is, since he is watched by her father and kin, and if they two are discovered together she shall be imprisoned and he slain: so he may win his death.

Sweet lady, thou wend thy mood, pity thou wilt me show;
Now I am as sorry a man as blithe a while ago;
Fifty times we kissed each other once at a window.
Fair behest makes many a man banish his sorrow.

Waylaway! Why sayest thou so? My grief thou makest new;
I loved a clerk all par amour, of love he was full true,
He was not blithe never a day unless he could me view.
I loved him better than my life, the sooth I tell to you.

While I was a clerk in school, well much I knew of lore,
I have suffered for thy love many woundës sore,
Far from home, and eke from men, near no friendly door,
Sweet lady, have pity on me. Alas! I can no more!

Thou seemest well to be the clerk, thou speakest with a will,
Thou shalt never for my love woundës suffer ill;
Father and mother and all my kin shall not hold me still,
For thou art mine and I am thine thy wishes to fulfil.

This poem partakes somewhat of the nature of the *estrif*, a form also employed in another poem, in which a maiden desirous of a husband without guile opposes the seductions of a transient lover whom she meets in a forest.

From a clerk (probably of Lindsay) we have an ironical poem of repentance for his sins in mocking the ladies in his previous verse. He feigns to be wholly converted to their praise, and envies the renown among them of a Norman poet called Richard, whose "book of ladies' love," an imitation doubtless of the Provençal *leys d'amor*, had taught him his fault.

These poems, however, are artificial in comparison with certain other songs of Midland origin, among which perhaps the best is one, full of the passion of spring, beginning as follows:

Lent is come with love to town,
With blossoms and with birdës roun,
That all this blissë bringeth;
Daisies in these dales,
Sweet notes of nightingales,
Each fowl song singeth.

Another by the same poet in the same twelve-line stanza regrets the falseness of women and warns them against deceivers. It too is a spring-song, praising the merry month of May, and betraying a genuine love of nature, quite different from that expressed by most of the French poems of the sort which begin with a reference to the season, but simply, it would seem, as a conventional means of getting under way.

The majority of the lyrics so far mentioned are found in an important manuscript, Harleian 2253, and some of them only there. This manuscript was written, it appears, about 1310, to satisfy the desire of a secular clerk connected with the priory of Leominster (Herefordshire) for an anthology of the current works in which he was especially interested. The collector was a person of varied taste, and all sorts of secular and religious poetry are represented in the 115 pieces (Latin, French, and English) that his book contains. Here we find such well-known works as the *Geste of King Horn*, the *Proverbs of Hendyng*, the *Debate of the Body and the Soul*, and the oldest of English miracle-plays, *The Harrowing of Hell*. But most interesting are the forty English songs which accompany them, eight of which are political, fourteen secular, and eighteen religious. We are most fortunate to have this body of mediæval lyrics thus preserved. Harleian MS. 2253 is as valuable for the study of lyrics as the Auchinleck MS., dating from about the same time, has been for the study of romance. Another manuscript, nearly related to the former, perhaps a little older, but not so exact, is Digby 86 in the Bodleian, in which a second version of several of the religious songs is extant. Both of these manuscripts are in the Southern dialect, but the lyrics included were not all written in the South, or at the same time.

Similarly of various date and district are the many short religious poems (prayers, orisons, Hail-Marys, and the like) contained in the important Vernon MS., written late in the fourteenth century. Worthy of particular note in this manuscript is a collection of some thirty lyrics with refrains. These poems, however, are all in the temper of the age of Chaucer and the author of *The Pearl*, and their consideration may well be postponed until we come to treat particularly of the writings of that time.

Strictly, the popular ballad should be kept apart from this division; for it is not a product of conscious literary art — is not reflective or subjective or intricate. And the lyric proper offers in these respects a striking contrast: its best qualities are personal feeling, original thought, and perfection of form. Nevertheless, it is well to remark again that ballads were current in great numbers in early England, and though few are preserved in old manuscripts, of their existence from the earliest times no one need doubt. In connection with the lays have already been mentioned many ballads embodying ancient material; but in no instance have we a mediæval version of these in similar form. Only one ballad is preserved in a manuscript earlier than the fifteenth century, namely *Judas*, which exists in thirteenth-century writing; but another poem of the same sort, likewise based on apocryphal story, is the picturesque account of *St. Stephen and Herod*, which, though not extant in a record earlier than 1450, is considered as equally old; and these were far from being isolated works. Langland's allusion to the rhymes of Robin Hood and Randolph, Earl of Chester, shows that such things were current before 1377.

The Battle of Otterburn was fought on August 19, 1388, and the original version of the famous ballad concerning it must have been composed before Chaucer's death. It was *à propos* of *Chevy Chace*, which treats the same theme, that Addison wrote in the *Spectator* the following significant words:

"When I travelled, I took particular delight in hearing the songs and fables that are come from father to son, and are most

in vogue among the common people of the countries through which I passed; for it is impossible that anything should be universally tasted and approved by a multitude, though they are only the rabble of a nation, which hath not in it some peculiar aptness to please and gratify the mind of man. Human nature is the same in all reasonable creatures; and whatever falls in with it, will meet with admirers amongst readers of all qualities and conditions. . . .

"I know nothing which more shows the essential and inherent perfection of simplicity of thought, above that which I call the Gothic manner in writing, than this; the first pleases all kinds of palates, and the latter only such as have formed to themselves a wrong artificial taste upon little fanciful authors and writers of epigram. Homer, Virgil, or Milton, so far as the language of their poems is understood, will please a reader of plain common-sense, who would neither relish nor comprehend an epigram of Martial, or a poem of Cowley: so, on the contrary, an ordinary song or ballad that is the delight of the common people, cannot fail to please all such readers as are not unqualified for the entertainment by their affectation or ignorance; and the reason is plain, because the same paintings of nature which recommend it to the most ordinary reader, will appear beautiful to the most refined."

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

It will not require many words with which to conclude this survey of the literary history of England during the early Middle Ages. The reader has been made acquainted with practically all extant writings of the period which have any literary significance, and he is in a position to judge of the character and scope of the native production—so far as these can be determined from the documents now available as evidence. This last restrictive clause needs emphasis here again, for it cannot have escaped notice how often the statement has been made in the preceding pages, concerning all sorts of Middle English poems from *Gawain and the Green Knight* back to the *Ormulum* and Layamon's *Brut*, that they exist in unique manuscripts, or not at all in their original forms. And this fact should be constantly kept in mind, not only because it serves to make more tolerant our critical judgment of particular works, but also because it evidently throws light on the station of the persons to whom in general such works made appeal. "Books written in English," as Mr. Pollard has pointed out, "had to fight their way into a field already occupied, and it is clear that until the fourteenth century they failed to obtain any real popularity among well-to-do people. Of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* there are thirty-five manuscripts in the British Museum alone, and nearly a third of these date from the twelfth century. Of English works, on the other hand, written before 1360, perhaps the

majority survive only in a single copy, which in no single case bears any trace of the fine writing found in manuscripts for wealthy book-buyers. At a later date there is no lack of manuscripts of Langland, the Wycliffite Bible, and Chaucer, some of them most beautifully written and decorated. The inference is obvious that in the earlier period English books appealed to a very small and by no means wealthy class of readers, and the development of our literature was retarded for lack of encouragement; while of the books written some at least which we would gladly have inherited, perished utterly, partly, no doubt, because so few copies were made in the first instance." Plainly, to estimate aright the value of early Middle English writings, one must understand their authors' special mission, the province committed to their control, the extent of their delegated authority. One must recognise the fact that in general they wrote with intent simply to instruct the ignorant and humble, that they rarely aimed at originality in either substance or form, that their works were for the most part disregarded by the learned and the polite.

These latter, the learned and the polite, though they wrote almost exclusively in what we now regard as foreign tongues, undoubtedly reflect best the enduring sentiments and spirit of the Middle Ages. We cannot, therefore, in justice, fail to consider their compositions carefully, if we would reconstruct the intellectual and artistic life of that period—a most important period, it should be remembered, when the foundations of modern English institutions were being laid, and when the literary tendencies of later times were taking root in established custom. Only when we shall drop from the records of our history these centuries of foreign control, when we shall refuse to employ the foreign words that then replenished and enriched our vocabulary, can we justifiably neglect the chief records of our literature during the same epoch. Far from ignoring the writings of men of the time because from a variety of causes Latin and French were the chosen instruments of English thought, we are in duty bound to

examine these with increasing pains in the effort to appreciate adequately the circumstances under which our composite race developed more varied and more refined modes of expression, together with a broader outlook, greater catholicity of temper, and a less parochial spirit in the domain of literary art.

For the contrast is great between the types of literature favoured in England before and after the Conquest. To regard the writers of the fourteenth century and later as the lineal descendants of Anglo-Saxon precursors is fundamentally false. Chaucer did not exhibit the spirit of early times reawakened after a slumber of centuries, but was the product of conditions secured by Norman and Angevin rule. English literature did not go through a tunnel on a long underground journey, as some conceive, to emerge at the end of it, the same in essentials of style. The whole nation had been immensely modified by the events of the intervening period, and literature, its voice, had helped to effect the change. So blended is English blood that no attainable knowledge of ethnic facts will ever provide a safe basis for inclusive generalisation concerning the contribution of the diverse racial currents to the majestic river of English literature. But thorough study alone is required to ascertain the source of its tributaries, the historical causes that affected at different times its general appearance and course. The profound change in the literary predilection of Englishmen during the Middle Ages was due to the continuous influx of foreign ideas which our ancestors were powerless, even if anxious, to withstand.

The Middle Ages have been sadly misrepresented. Ecstatic romanticists and ecclesiologists on the one hand, and scornful classicists and dissenters on the other, have variously deluded the public concerning the characteristics of the epoch. Both parties have based their judgments on incomplete or inaccurate knowledge of the actual conditions of mediæval life. The former have forgotten that "all that glitters is not gold"; the latter, that "people in glass houses should not throw stones." The Middle Ages were ages of reality as well as romance, of scepticism as well

as faith, of cynicism as well as idealistic devotion, of rollicking "sunburnt mirth" as well as gorgeous pomp and pageantry. They were ages, moreover, when keen acumen, subtle wit, liberal learning, large knowledge of the world, untiring industry, and practical administrative power were possessed by a host of representative men. But after all is said which "mesure," sanity, and historical truth require, the fact remains that the Middle Ages allure the imaginative with a peculiar, abiding charm. They constitute the most genuinely poetic era that Europe has known, and in literature as well as in architecture much was then achieved which surpasses in beauty anything else of its kind. It is true that the names of very few distinguished writers in the vernacular can be mentioned; but no one will deny that many poetic themes which then originated may be counted "among the posterities" of literature; and it is not a question easily answered, whether that age is more valuable to the world, more significant in the history of civilisation, which discovers and displays the ore of the imagination, or that which takes what is placed in its hands and perfects its form. At all events, the Middle Ages, when poetic material of the finest quality was laid bare, even though not altogether separated from common dross and dirt, are perhaps more instructive to the historian of letters than any subsequent period, because they were a time of new planting and fresh burgeoning, of eager forecasting and glad experiment, of struggling endeavour to realise and embody the high visions of great nations in the vigour of their youth.

> And the words of a Lapland song
> Are haunting my memory still:
> A boy's will is the wind's will,
> And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.

One is constantly reminded in reading mediæval English literature of the story of the Grail-hero Perceval. Though a child of noble lineage, he was reared as a rustic, apart from his fellows, in a woodland retreat. Inevitably rough, untutored, and ignorant

of polite ways, he was nevertheless simple, pious, and sincere. By a happy accident he was led to the brilliant court of Arthur, and, though at first mocked at by the knights of the Round Table for his rudeness and lack of sophistication, he later amazed them all by his strength of muscle and force of will. For a time his superiors subjected him to discipline and trial, but he soon found occasion to start out on an independent career which was marked by steady progress towards exalted achievement. After older and more accomplished warriors had abandoned the quest of the Grail, he kept pressing on, until finally he solved that holy mystery—and alone arrived at the summit of human success.

Elizabethan literature may be likened to a mature man who, having inherited a vigorous constitution from robust English parents, was first liberally schooled in France, and then travelled here and there in Europe, lingering with most *abandon* in the South. By foreign study and cosmopolitan associations his knowledge increased, his standards became more justly fixed, and his individual powers grew more clearly marked. The years of this gradual enlightenment were most important in shaping his after career, because what he learned then was never forgotten: it stimulated him to lofty undertaking, while at the same time it restrained him from crudity and excess. The Middle Ages were the *Wanderjahre* of English verse.

"The essential merit of mediæval art," an architect has recently said, "lay in the freshness of its instinctive creativeness, in its uncalculating grasp of beauty." And this is true also of popular mediæval poetry. Its call is "the call of incense-breathing morn." The age of chivalry produced men who wrote with freedom and spontaneity, with zest and zeal, with virility and emotion, and they have left us a precious heritage of idealistic example. Such writers, revealing the thought of such an age, will always remain significant to students of the growth of culture, if only as the inspiration of some of the most delightful parts of "that great poem which," as Shelley so finely conceived, "all

poets, like the coöperating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world."

We have here been occupied more with the matter than with the manner of poetry in the Middle Ages, because in the former we find its most real contribution to modern times. But the manner also it is important to regard closely before making a final estimate of the literary power of the period. In another volume the effect of early English verse on the externals of later styles will be more fully discussed. Then, too, more may be said of the quality of the English character as evinced in this its first product—of the wholesomeness of its affections, the freshness of its enthusiasms, the genuineness of its simplicity, the steadiness of its purpose, the vitality of its ideals.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Historical Events		Latin	
1066-87	William the Conqueror.	1070-89	Lanfranc, Archb. of Cant.
1071	Hereward in Ely.	1093-1109	Anselm, Archb. of Cant.
1084	Order of Carthusians founded.	† 1100	Thomas, Archb. of York.
1086	*Doomsday Book.*	*fl.* 1090	Osbern of Canterbury.
		† 1099	Osmund of Salisbury.
1087-1100	William Rufus.	† 1124	Eadmer of Canterbury.
1096-99	First Crusade.	*fl.* 1102	Sæwulf.
† 1100	Godefroy de Bouillon.	† 1107	Godfrey of Winchester.
1095-1103	Magnus III. of Norway—Conqueror of Western Isles—died in Ireland.	*fl.* 1112	Reginald of Canterbury.
		1119	Play of St. Catherine at Dunstable.
		fl. 1125	Hilarius.
1100-35	Henry I.	† 1154	Lawrence of Durham.
1106	Battle of Tinchebrai.	*b.* 1116	Athelard of Bath.
c. 1110	*Íslendingabók* (Ari Þorkelsson, † 1148).	*fl.* 1143	Robert of Retines.
		† 1118	Florence of Worcester.
1128	Matilda marries Geoff. of Anjou, son of Fulk, King of Jerusalem, Plantagenet.	*fl.* 1130	Simeon of Durham.
		1075-1143?	Ordericus Vitalis.
		1084?-1155	Henry of Huntingdon.
† 1123	Marbod, Bp. of Rennes.	1090?-1143	William of Malmesbury (*De Gestis*, *c.* 1120).
† 1133	Hildebert of Tours.		
		1100?-54	Geoffrey of Monmouth (*Historia*, *c.* 1136).
1135-54	Stephen.		
1138	Battle of the Standard.	*fl.* 1143	Alfred of Beverley.
1138-1254	House of Hohenstaufen—Wars of the Guelphs and Ghibellines.	1109-66	Ailred of Rievaulx.
		† 1147	Robert Pullen.
		fl. 1150	Vacarius.
† 1147	Robert, Earl of Gloucester.	† 1161	Theobald, Archb. of Cant.
1147-49	Second Crusade.	*c.* 1120-80	John of Salisbury (*Polycraticus*, 1156).
1152	Henry marries Eleanor of Aquitaine.	† 1167	Robert of Melun.
1153	Treaty of Wallingford.	† 1180	Adam du Petit Pont.
† 1150	Berengar.	*fl.* 1170	John of Cornwall.
1079-1142	Abelard.	*fl.* 1170	Thomas Brown.
1091-1153	Bernard of Clairvaux.	† 1184	Gerard la Pucelle.
1100-64	Peter Lombard.	*fl.* 1160-1204	Peter of Blois.
		† 1184	Bartholomew, Bp. of Exeter.
1154-89	Henry II.	† 1187	Gilbert Foliot.
1154-59	Pope Adrian IV. (Nicholas Breakspeare).	† 1197	William de Longchamp, Bp. of Ely.
1158-65	Welsh Wars.	† 1190	Baldwin, Archb. of Cant.
1162	Becket made Archb. of Cant.	† 1190	Ranulph de Glanville.
1164	Constitutions of Clarendon.	† 1198	Richard FitzNeal.
1170	Murder of Becket.	*c.* 1146-1220?	Giraldus Cambrensis.
1171	Conquest of Ireland.	*c.* 1140-1210	Walter Map.
1174	Battle of Alnwick.		*Carmina Burana.*
1175-84	Choir of Canterbury built.	*fl.* 1175	Odo of Sheriton.

APPENDIX I

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

FRENCH

NOTE.—The works mentioned below which are marked with an asterisk are neither Norman nor Anglo-French. All of them, however, will be seen to have some connection with English productions. The dates assigned are in general as stated in the last edition of Gaston Paris's *Littérature française au moyen âge*.

1066	**Chanson de Roland* sung at Hastings. (Present form, *c.* 1080—Oxford MS., *c.* 1170—Rhymed, *c.* 1165.)
c. 1060	**Pèlerinage de Charlemagne.*
c. 1075	Laws of William the Conqueror.
before 1135	Prose Psalters of Oxford and Cambridge.
	*Saints' Lives—Sermons in Verse—Religious and Secular Poems—Tales (Arthurian—Renart—Epic).
?	Bleheris: *Geste de Gawayne.*
1119	Philippe de Thaün: *Comput.*
c. 1130	,, ,, *Bestiaire.*
c. 1120	Songs of Luc de la Barre (against Henry I.).
1121	Benoît: *Vie de St. Brendan.*
before 1154	Elie of Winchester and Everard of Kirkham: Met. trans. of *Cato.*
	Wace: Short Poems.
c. 1140	David: (Lost) Poem on Henry I.
c. 1148	Gaimar: *Estoire des Engleis.*
c. 1155	Wace: *Brut.*
1150-60	**Thèbes, Enéas, Sept Sages.*
c. 1160	Benoît de Ste. More: *Troie. Lancelot* (Ulrich's source).
	Lost Breton Lays.
	Robert Biquet: *Lai du Cor.*
c. 1150-89	*Crestien de Troyes: Trans. of Ovid; *Tristan*; *Erec* (*c.* 1160); *Cligès* (1168); *Lancelot* (*c.* 1170); *Ivain* (*c.* 1172); *Perceval* (1175-89).
c. 1170	Thomas: *Tristan.*
	Thomas: *Aelof; Horn. Waldef; Havelok.*

ENGLISH

NOTE.—The dialect of the Middle English works mentioned below is indicated by the letters or words in parentheses. Thus: S.M. = South Midland; S.W. = South-West; N.M.S. = North Middle South; N.E.M. = North-East Midland; K. = Kentish. In many cases the statement of dialect or date is necessarily only tentative.

1066-1154	*Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*—i. to 1121; ii. 1122-31; iii. 1132-54 (Peterborough).
	Anglo-Saxon MSS. copied.
Not preserved	Songs—Ballads—Lays—Proverbs—Epic Tales by Leofric *et al.*
,,	Sagas: *Horn; Aelof; Waltheof; Tristram; Wade; Havelok; Beves; Guy*, etc.
1100-50	West-Saxon Gospels transcribed.
	Old Kentish and other (*e.g.* Aelfric's) Homilies rewritten.
	Short Religious and Didactic Poems: *Paternoster, Creed, Signs before Judgment*, etc. (S.M.).
	Precepts of King Alfred (S.W.).
?	Fables of Alfred (Marie's source).
c. 1150	Songs of St. Godric of Durham († 1170).
1150-1200—	
	Distichs of Cato.
	Debate of Body and Soul (Worc.).
	Legends of Katherine group (N.M.S.).
	Here-Prophecy.
c. 1170	*Poema Morale* (Dorset).
c. 1200	*Ormulum* (N.E.M.).
	Vices and Virtues (S.E.).
c. 1205	Layamon's *Brut*, A (Worc.).
1200-50	Homilies—*Holy Maidenhood; Soul's Ward; A Bispel;* 15 *Signs;* 11 *Pains;* 5 *Joys;*

Historical Events	
	Wars of Henry with his sons.
1187	Saracens take Jerusalem.
1152-90	Frederick Barbarossa.
1157-82	Valdemar the Great of Denmark.
† 1177	Adam of St. Victor.
	Bernard of Cluny.
fl. 1169-75	Peter Comestor.
1119-74	Rabbi ben Ezra.
1135-1204	Maimonides.
1189-99	Richard Cœur de Lion.
1189-92	Third Crusade—Acre taken 1191.
1192-94	Richard in Germany.
1180-1223	Philip Augustus.
1185-1202	Sverrir of Norway.
1182-1202	Cnut VI. of Denmark.
fl. 1200	Saxo Grammaticus.
1149?-98	Averroës.
1114-1203?	Alain de l'Isle.
1199-1216	John.
1198-1216	Pope Innocent III.
1202-04	Fourth Crusade.
1204	Loss of Normandy, Anjou, Maine, and Touraine.
1207-44	Albigensian Crusade.
1208-13	Interdict.
1213	Langton accepted as Archb. († 1228).
1215	Magna Charta.
1170-1221	St. Dominic—order confirmed, 1216.
1182-1226	St. Francis—order founded, 1210; confirmed, 1223.
1216-72	Henry III.
1216-19	Regency of Wm. Marshal.
1220-24	Friars come to England.
1212-50	Frederick II., Emperor.
1228-29	Fifth Crusade.
1226-70	St. Louis.
1236	Henry marries Eleanor of Provence.
1244	Jerusalem finally lost.
c. 1257	Sorbonne founded.
1248-54	Sixth Crusade.
1254	Henry renounces claim to Continental possessions except Aquitaine and Gascony.
? 1255-62	Hanseatic League.
1258	First proclamation in English.
	The Mad Parliament.
c. 1260	Balliol College founded.
1263	Wars with Barons.
1264	Mise of Amiens.
	Battle of Lewes.
1265	Parlt. of Simon de Montfort.
	Battle of Evesham.
† 1266	Manfred.
1270	Seventh Crusade.
1264-74	Merton College founded.
1272-1307	Edward I.
1285-1314	Philip the Fair.
1276-84	Conq. and annexation of Wales.
1279	Statute of Mortmain.

Latin	
fl. 1175	Gualterus Anglicus.
fl. 1180	Joseph of Exeter.
fl. 1185	Henry of Saltrey.
fl. 1190	Nigel Wireker.
	De Phillide et Flora, etc.
	Political Poems and Satires.
	Elegies, Eulogies, etc.
	Lives of Saints, Legends.
	Religious and Didactic Poems.
	Romulus.
	Jewish writers.
1157-1217	Alexander Neckham.
† 1193	Benedict of Peterborough.
† 1198?	William of Newburgh.
† 1201?	Roger of Hoveden.
† 1202?	Ralph of Diceto.
fl. 1189	Richard of Devizes.
fl. 1200	Jocelin of Brakeland.
† *c.* 1235	Gervase of Tilbury.
fl. 1200	Richard of the Temple.
fl. 1207	Ralph of Coggeshall.
fl. 1200	Geoffrey de Vinsauf.
fl. 1230	John of Garland.
† 1236	Roger of Wendover.
fl. 1230-50	Bartholomæus Anglicus.
† 1240	St. Edmund Rich.
† 1259	Matthew Paris.
† 1245	Alexander of Hales.
† 1253	Robert Grosseteste.
† 1257?	Adam Marsh.
† 1267	Henry of Bracton.
fl. 1250	Thomas of Eccleston.
	Gesta Romanorum.
	Collection of Latin Tales.
	Books on Astronomy, etc.
	Books of Instruction and Edification.
	Political Poems.
	Bernard Gordon.
† 1275	John of Hoveden.
1214-94	Roger Bacon.
† 1293	Michael Scott.
c. 1265-1308	Duns Scotus.
1250?-1312	Rishanger.
1258?-1328	Nicholas Trivet.
fl. 1300	Walter of Hemingburgh.
c. 1290-1349	Richard Rolle of Hampole.
1281-1345	Richard of Bury.
1275-1345	Walter Burleigh.
† 1349	William of Ockham.
1290-1349	Thomas Bradwardine.
† 1349	Robert Holcot.
† 1360	Richard FitzRalph.
† 1361	John of Gaddesden.
fl. 1330	John of Trokelowe.
fl. 1330	Henry Blaneford.
† 1347	Adam Murimuth.
† 1364	Ranulf Higden.
fl. 1363	Henry Knighton.
† 1384?	John of Fordun.
† 1422	Thomas Walsingham.

Continental Latin Writers	
† *c.* 1240	Jacques de Vitry.
† *c.* 1261	Étienne de Bourbon.
1190?-1264	Vincent de Beauvais.

FRENCH	ENGLISH
c. 1173 *Garnier du Pont St. Maxence.	
c. 1175 Benet: *Vie de St. Thomas.*	
1160-74 Wace: *Roman de Rou.*	
1174 Jordan Fantosme: History.	
c. 1172-76 Benoît: *Chronique des Ducs.*	
c. 1175-85 *Marie de France: *Lais* (*c.* 1175); *Ysopet* (*c.* 1180); *Espurgatoire St. Patriz.*	
**Amis et Amiles; Parthenopeus; Floire et Blancheflour* (2 versions); *Aucassin et Nicolete.*	
*Lambert li Tort: *Alexandre.*	
Biblical Paraphrases—Lives of Saints — Met. Homilies — Psalters, etc.	
Samson de Nanteuil: *Proverbes de Salomon*, etc.	
c. 1180 Simon de Frêsne: St. George.	
**Li Proverbe au vilain.*	
c. 1180 *Béroul; cont. *c.* 1209.	
c. 1185 Hugh of Rutland: *Hippomédon; Protesilaus.*	
c. 1190 Poem on Conquest of Ireland.	
Folie Tristan.	
1192-94 *Richard I.—Poems.	
c. 1196 *Ambroise: *Hist. de la Guerre Sainte.*	
c. 1200 **Roman de Renart* (part).	
*André de Coutances.	
*Jean Bodel.	
Chardri (1200-20?).	
1200-1300 *Chansons de Geste* — Lays — Fabliaux — Lyrics—Debates — Lapidaries — Bestiaries — Religious and Didactic Verse — *Dits* — Poems on Courtly Love—Secular Verse—Lives of Saints—Pious Tales—Sermons—Bible-Paraphrase, etc. Books of Edification, Instruction, and Utility (French and Anglo-French).	
1200-35 *Boeve de Haumtone—Guy de Warwick—Foulque Fitz-Warine — Eustache le Moine.*	
*Renaud de Beaujeu: *Guinglain.*	
Floire et Blancheflour; Melior et Ydoine (Debates).	
Amadas et Ydoine.	
**Mantel Mautaillé.*	
Mystery of *Resurrection.*	
c. 1205 **Guillaume de Palerme.*	
c. 1210 **Dolopathos.*	
c. 1210 Guillaume le Clerc: *Bestiaire.*	
1212-14 Angier: Dialogues of St. Gregory, etc.	
c. 1213 *Villehardouin: *Conqueste de Constantinople.*	
c. 1215 Robert de Boron: *Joseph—Merlin—Perceval* (?).	
*Continuators of Crestien's *Perceval*: Gerbert, Manessier, Wauchier de Denain.	
c. 1220 *Prose Romances: *Queste del St. Graal — Lancelot —*	
	Sinners Beware; Death; Love-Song of Our Lady; Wooing of Our Lord; Passion of Our Lord; Orisons, etc. (S.W.).
	Doomsday (S.M.).
	Long Life (K.).
	Compassio Mariae (N.W.M.)
	Benedictine Rule (Winteney).
	Lives of Saints — Religious, Didactic, and Secular Lyrics —Proverbs (S. and M.).
	Summer is y-comen in (N.).
	Judas (S.W.).
1208-13	*Bestiary* (N.E.M.).
before 1237	*Ancren Riwle* (Dorset).
c. 1220	*Owl and Nightingale* (Dorset).
after 1226	Thomas de Hales: *Love Rune* (S.W.).
c. 1244	*When Holy Church is under foot* (S.W.).
c. 1250	*Geste of King Horn* (S.M.).
	Genesis and *Exodus* (S.E.M.).
	Assumptio Mariae.
1250-1300	Political Songs and Satires—Religious and Secular Lyrics —Pious Tales—Saints' Lives and Legends—Religious and Didactic Verse (15 *Signs*, 7 *Sins*, 5 *Joys*, 10 *Commandments*, *Doomsday*, *Passion*, etc.).
1250-75—	Layamon, B.
1258	Proclamation by Henry III.
c. 1258	*Dame Sirith* (S.E. from S.W.M.) [*De Clerico et Puella* (N.M.)]
	Fox and Wolf (S.E.)—*Land of Cokaygne* (S.).
	Floris and Blauncheflour (E.M.).
1275-1300	*Sir Tristrem* (N.)—*Amis and Amiloun* (N.E.M.).
	Arthur and Merlin; King Alisaunder; Richard Coer de Lion (K.).
	Proverbs of Hendyng (S.M.?).
	St. Patrick's Purgatory (K.)—*Ypotis* (S.E.M.).
	Birth of Jesus, Childhood of Jesus (S.).
	Stacions of Rome (S.E.M.)—*Estoire del Evangile* (S.E.M.) — *Maximion* (S.W.M.) — *Evangelium Nicodemi* (Sc.)—*Lay Folks' Mass Book* (N.) — *Little Cato*; *Cato Major* (S. from N.)—*Dispute between Jesus and Scribes* (K.)—*Dispute between Thrush and Nightingale* (S.).
	Fragment on Pop. Science (M.).
	Castle of Love (S.E.M.).
	Harrowing of Hell—Mystery (N.E.M.).
	Legend Cycle (N.).

Historical Events

1290	Expulsion of Jews.
1291	Acre lost — Last of Christian possessions in Palestine abandoned.
1292	Balliol becomes King of Scotland.
1294	Wars in France and Scotland.
1295	First perfect Parliament.
1296	Capture of Berwick.
1297	Revolt of Scots under Wallace.
1298	Battle of Falkirk.
1302	Battle of Courtrai.
1305	Wallace executed.
1306	Bruce crowned.
1307-27	Edward II.
1309-77	Popes at Avignon.
1312	Order of Knights Templars dissolved.
	Execution of Piers Gaveston.
1314	Battle of Bannockburn.
1321	The Despensers exiled.
1327	Edward deposed and murdered.
1327-77	Edward III.
	Regency of Isabella and Mortimer.
† 1329	Robert Bruce.
1333	Battle of Halidon Hill.
1346	Battle of Neville's Cross.
	Battle of Crécy — Hundred Years' War.
1349	Black Death (also 1361, 1369).
1360	Treaty of Brétigny.
1376	Death of Black Prince.
1313-80	Bertrand du Guesclin, Constable of France.
1376	The Good Parliament.
1377-99	Richard II.
1381	Wat Tyler's revolt.
1388	Battle of Otterburn.
1393	Statute of Præmunire
c. 1324-84	John Wycliffe.
c. 1330-1408	John Gower.
c. 1340-1400	Geoffrey Chaucer.

Continental Latin Writers

† 1280	Albertus Magnus.
c. 1225-74	Thomas Aquinas.
1221-74	Bonaventura.
1235-1314	Arnoldus de Villa Nova.

Provençal

† 1127	William, Count of Poitiers.
† *c.* 1185	Macabru.
† *c.* 1195	Bernard de Ventadour.
	Bertran de Born.
† 1196	Alphonso II. of Aragon.
c. 1200	Arnaut Daniel.
fl. 1200	Bertran de Born (the Younger).
† *c.* 1215	Peire Vidal.
† 1230	Savaric de Mauleon.
c. 1240	Gaucelm Faidit.
† *c.* 1255	Sordello.

Italian

† 1246	Albertano of Brescia.
1230 ?-98	Jacobus de Voragine.
fl. 1270-87	Guido delle Colonne.
1265-1321	Dante.
1304-74	Petrarch.
1313-75	Boccaccio.
† 1278	Niccolà of Pisa.
1240-1300	Cimabue.
1266-1337	Giotto.

German

1170-80	Eilhart von Oberg : *Tristan.*
1192-1202	Hartman von Aue : *Erec, Ywein.*
c. 1195	Ulrich von Zatzikhoven : *Lanzelet.*
c. 1203-15	Wolfram von Eschenbach : *Parzival.*
c. 1215	Gottfried von Strassburg : *Tristan.*
c. 1170-1230	Walther von der Vogelweide, and the *Minnesinger.*
1190-1200	*Nibelungenlied.*
1242-50	Ulrich von Türheim : *Tristan.*
c. 1300	Heinrich von Freiberg : *Tristan.*

Scandinavian and Welsh

1067-1148	Ari the historian.
c. 1140-1260	Chief Icelandic Sagas.
1178-1241	Snorri Sturluson.
c. 1220	Prose *Edda.*
c. 1250	Codex Regius of the Poetic *Edda* written.
c. 1226-50	French Lays and Romances translated.
? 1080-1260	Tales of *Mabinogion* (MS. of Red Book of Hergest, first half of fourteenth century).
† 1197	Owen, author of *Hirlas Horn.*

FRENCH

Tristan — Perceval — Sept Sages.
*Comte de Bretaigne: *Proverbes.*
Salomon et Marcoul.
1218-25 *Gautier de Coinci: *Miracles de Notre Dame.*
c. 1224 **Vie de Guillaume le Maréchal.*
c. 1237 *Guillaume de Lorris: *Roman de la Rose.*
c. 1240 **Grand St. Graal.*
1243 **Sidrac.*
1245 *Gautier de Metz: *Image du Monde.*
Grosseteste (?): *Chastel d'Amour.*
1250-1300 *Last French Redactions of Romances — Political and Satirical Songs — Religious, Didactic, and Secular Lyrics —Homilies, Legends, Saints' Lives—Pious Tales, Miracles of Our Lady — Debates — Mysteries and Miracles — Books of Instruction and Edification—Fabliaux.
**Roman de Renart.*
1264 **La Paix aux Anglais—La Charte aux Anglais.*
Robert of Gretham: *Corset, Miroir.*
1267 Pierre of Peckham: *Miroir.*
William of Wadington: *Manuel des Péchiés.*
c. 1265 *Brunetto Latini: *Trésor.*
1271 *Rustician of Pisa.*
1225-85 *Rustebeuf.
c. 1270-80 *Philippe de Beaumanoir.
c. 1250-70 *Adam de la Halle.
c. 1277 *Jean de Meung: *Roman de la Rose.*
c. 1280 *Adenet: *Cléomadès.*
1298-1315 *Marco Polo: *Travels.*
c. 1300 **Le Châtelain de Couci.*
Walter of Bibbysworth.
c. 1307 Pers de Langtoft.
1300 *Joinville: *Vie de St. Louis.*
1310-15 *Jacques de Longuyon: *Vœux du Paon.*
c. 1330 Nicole Bozon: *Contes Moralisés.*
1330 ff. *Guillaume de Deguilleville.
1338 **Vows of Heron.*
Chroniques de London.
c. 1380 *Chandos-Herald: *Vie du Prince Noir.*
1338-1410 *Froissart.
† 1369 Sir Thos. Gray: *Scalacronica.*
† *c.* 1474 Jehan de Waurin: *Recueil.*

ENGLISH

Gloucester Legend Cycle (S.W.M.).
c. 1298 Robert of Gloucester: *Chronicle* (S.W.M.).
c. 1297 *Song of Husbandmen* (S.).
c. 1300 *Surtees Psalter* (N.)—*Prose Psalter* (W.M.).
c. 1302 *Havelok the Dane* (N.E.M.).
? 1300-25 Poems in Auchinleck MS. (1330-40): *Sir Orfeo* (S.E.M.) —*Sir Degare* (S.E.M.)—*Le Freine* (S.E.M. ?)—*Emare* (N.E.M.) — *Ywain and Gawain* (N.)—*Horn Child* (N.M.)—*Guy of Warwick* (4 versions, S.? M.)—*Beves of Hampton* (3 versions, N.? M.)—*Seven Wise Masters* (2 versions, S.E., N.)—*Seven Sages* (S.E.M.)—*Sir Otuel* (S.E.M.) — *Roland and Vernagu* (N.E.M.)—*King of Tarsus* (N.E.M.)—*Pennyworth of Wit* (S.E.M.).
c. 1310 Harl. MS. 2253—Lyrics (Leominster).
Elegy on Edward I. (S.W.M.).
Political Poems — Sermons, Legends, etc.
Speculum Guy (S.E.M.).
Adam Davy: *Dreams.*
William Banister.
Cursor Mundi (N.).
1303 Robert of Brunne: *Handlyng Synne* (E.M.).
c. 1312-27 Short Chronicle.
† 1327 Thomas Bek of Castelford: *Chronicle* (N.M.).
c. 1330 *Metrical Homilies* (N.).
fl. 1320 William of Shoreham: Poems (K.).
1330-49 Richard Rolle of Hampole: *Myrour—Psalter.*
Pricke of Conscience (N.).
1338 Robert of Brunne: *Chronicle* (E.M.).
1340 Dan Michel: *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (K.).
1333-52 Lawrence Minot: Poems (N.M.).
c. 1340 *Tale of Gamelyn* (E.M.).
1350-75 Allit. Poems on Alexander (W.M.).
Allit. *Morte Arthure* (N.W.M.).
Vision of St. Paul; Trentalls of St. Gregory; How Good Wife taught her Daughter; How Wise Man taught his Son (S.E.M.).
Ipotis—A B C of Aristotle—Metrical Treatise on Dreams.
Dispute between Mary and Cross (S.W.M.).
Dispute between Good Man and Devil (W.M.).

About 1400

Sir Gowghter (N.E.M.)—*Earl of Tolouse* (N.E.M.)—*Jeaste of Sir Gawain* (S.M.)—*Sir Cleges* (N.M.)—*Laud Troy Book*—*Morte Arthure* (S.M.?)—*Song of Roland* (S.W.M.)—*Sir Ferumbras* (S.?)—*Siege of Milan* (N.)—*Duke Rowland and Sir Ottuell* (N.)—*Sowdan of Babylon* (E.M.)—*Thomas of Erceldoun* (N.)—*Vision of Tundale* (N.?).

1400-50

Parthenope, 2 versions (S.S.M.)—*Squire of Low Degree* (S.M.?)—*Ipomedon* (M.)—*Sir Triamour* (N.M.)—*Torrent of Portugal* (N.M.)—*Robert of Sicily* (S.M.?)—*Sir Generides*, 2 versions, one *c.* 1430 (M.)—*Partenay* (N.M.)—*Buik of Alexander*, 1438? (Sc.)—Lovelich: *Holy Grail*, *Merlin* (S.M.)—*Sir Peny* (N.)—*Speculum Humanæ Salvationis* (N.M.?)—*Tale of Beryn* (S.)—*Owaine Miles* (S.)—*Arthur's Death* (S.)—*Gesta Romanorum* in English (1425-50)—*Ponthus et Sidone* (*c.* 1450)—*Book of Knight of La Tour Landry* (1422-61)—Thornton MS. (1430-44).

1400-1500

Lives of Saints—Legends—Pious Tales—"Mirrors"—Rituals—Jest-Books—Debates—Political Songs and Satires—Books of Instruction and Utility (Heraldry, Venery, Medicine, Grammar, Husbandry, Urbanity, Nurture, Courtesy, Cookery, etc.)—Religious, Didactic, and Secular Lyrics—Ballads.

Wright's Chaste Wife—*Miller of Abyngdon*—*Monk and Boy*—*Tale of Basyn*—*Cuckold's Dance*—*How a Plowman learned his Paternoster*—*Child of Bristow*—*Merchant and his Son*—*Tale of an Incestuous Daughter*—*Felon Sowe and Friars of Richmond*—*Huntyng of the Hare*—*Why I can't be a Nun*—*Debate of Carpenter's Tools*—*Rule of St. Benet* (N.)—*A B C of Aristotle* (several versions), etc. etc.

Scottish (1450-1500): *Eger and Grim*—*Lancelot of the Laik*—*Rauf Coilyear*—*Ballad of Nine Nobles*—*Roswell and Lillian*, etc. *Scottish Writers* (above mentioned): Wyntoun (*Chronicle*, *c.* 1425)—"Blind Harry" (*Wallace*, *c.* 1488)—Dunbar (*c.* 1460–*c.* 1525)—Henryson (*Fables*, *c.* 1476-86)—Sir Gilbert Hay (*Alexander*, 1499).

English Writers (above mentioned): Occleve (*De Regimine*, 1413)—Lydgate (*Troy Book*, *c.* 1410, and *Thebes*, 1412-21; *Falls*, 1424-33)—Audelay (*Legends*, 1426)—R. Misyn (tr. of Rolle, 1434-35)—Capgrave († 1464, Chronicle to 1417)—Hardyng (*Chronicle*, *c.* 1465)—Osbern Bokenham (*Legends*, 1443-46)—Benet Burgh (*Dist. Cato*, 1461-65)—Fortescue († *c.* 1476)—Malory (*Morte Darthur*, 1469-70).

Caxton (1422-91), Prints of Romances, etc.: *Recuyell Troy* (1473-74)—*Dictys and Sayings* (1477)—*Chronicles* (1480)—*Godeffroy of Bologne* (1481)—*Reynard* (1481)—*Polychronicon* (1482)—*Cato* (1483)—*Festial* (1483)—*Golden Legend* (1484)—*Æsop* (1484)—*Morte Darthur* (1485)—*Charles the Great* (1485)—*Paris and Vienne* (1485)—*Four Sons of Aymon* (*c.* 1489)—*Blanchardyn* (*c.* 1489)—*Eneydos* (1490), etc.

Other Romances in Black-letter Editions: *Salomon and Marcolf* (*c.* 1492)—*Helyas*—*Melusine* (*c.* 1500)—*Apollonius* (1570)—*Robert the Devil*—*Sir Degare*—*Seven Wise Masters*—*Valentine and Orson*—*Virgilius*—*Friar Bacon*—*Patient Grissel* (1619)—Lord Berners: *Arthur of Little Britain*; *Huon of Bordeaux* (1525-33)—Thomas Robinson: *Seven Champions*, *George à Lincoln*, etc.

Percy Folio MS. (*c.* 1620; date of poems uncertain, from *c.* 1300 on): *Sir Lambewell*—*Carl of Carlisle*—*The Green Knight*—*Turk and Gawain*—*Weddyng of Sir Gawain*—*Guy and Colbrand*—*King Estmere*—*King Arthur and the King of Cornwall*—*Sir Lionell*—*Merlin*—*King Arthur's Death*—*Robin Hood*, etc.

	English
	Dispute between Christian and Jew (Sc.).
	Vernon MS.—Lyrics, Legends, Sermons, etc., 1370-80 (S.E.M.?).
	Ballads of Robin Hood, etc.—Popular Tales.
1350-1400	*Joseph of Arimathea* (W.M.) — *William of Palerne* (W.M.) — *Dest. of Troy* (N.W.M.) — *Awntyrs of Arthur* (N.W.M.). *thelston* (N.E.M.) — *Sir Percyvelle* (N.M.) — Chestre's *Launfal* (S.E.) — *Libeaus Desconus* (S.E.)—*Octavian* (S.E.)—*Octavian* (N.)—*Ipomedon* (2 versions: N.M., N.W.M.)—*La Bone Florence* (N.M.?) — *Sir Eglamour* (N.M.) — *Sir Isumbras* (N.)—*Sir Degrevant* (N.) — *Sir Amadace* (N.)—*Avowyng of Arthur* (N.)—*Siege of Troy* (S.)—*Siege of Jerusalem* (S.)—*Dest. of Jer.* (S.W.M.)—*Chevalere Assigne* (M.)—?*Golagros and Gawain* (Sc.)—*Arthur* (S.)—*Hermit and Outlaw* (M.)—*Smith and Dame* (S. from N.).
	Psystyl Sweet Susan (Sc.).
	Parlement 3 Ages (W.M.)—*Winner and Waster* (W.M.).
c. 1370 ff.	*Cleanness; Patience; Pearl; Gawain and the Green Knight* (W.M.).
c. 1375	Barbour's *Bruce* (Sc.) — Legends (Sc.).
	Langland: *Vision*, A, 1362; B, 1377; C, *c.* 1398 (W.M.).
c. 1382	Wycliffe: Trans. of Bible.
?	Lydgate's *Esopus*.
c. 1387 ff.	John of Trevisa: *Polychronicon* (*c.* 1387); *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (1391-98).
	Books of Courtesy (*Babees Book*, etc.).
	Books of Instruction and Utility (*Science of Cirurgie*, etc.).
	Sermon against Miracle Plays.
c. 1400	John Mirk: *Inst. Parish Priests*—*Festial.*

APPENDIX II

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

WORKS REFERRED TO BY ABBREVIATED TITLES

Abbot. Abbotsford Club Publications.

Anglia. *Anglia, Zeitschrift für englische Philologie*, etc., ed. R. P. Wülcker and M. Trautmann, Halle, 1877 ff.

Archæol. *Archæologia Cambrensis, A Record of the Antiquities of Wales*, etc., 5th series, L., 1846-85.

Archiv. *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, ed. L. Herrig et al., Elberfeld and Iserlohn, 1846 ff.; Braunschweig, 1849 ff.

Bann. Bannatyne Club Publications, Edin., 1823 ff.

Böddeker. *Altenglische Dichtungen des MS. Harl*, 2253, ed. Karl Böddeker, B., 1878.

Camd. Camden Society Publications, 1838 ff.

Ch. S. Chaucer Society Publications, L., 1868 ff.

Child. *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. Francis James Child, 5 vols., Boston, 1882-98.

E.E.T.S. [E.S.] Early English Text Society Publications, 1864 ff. [E.S. Extra Series.]

Ellis. George Ellis, *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*, rev. J. O. Halliwell, Bohn's Antiquarian Library, L., 1848. (This work was first published 3 vols., L. 1805. This one-volume edition is cited because more accessible.)

Eng. Poets. *Works of the English Poets from Chaucer to Cowper*, etc., ed. Samuel Johnson and Alexander Chalmers, 21 vols., L., 1810.

E. St. *Englische Studien*, ed. E. Kölbing, Heilbronn, 1877 ff.; J. Hoops, Leip., 1900 ff.

Erl. Beit. *Erlanger Beiträge zur englischen Philologie*, ed. Hermann Varnhagen, Erlangen, 1889 ff.

Furnivall. *Early English Poems and Lives of Saints*, etc., ed. F. J. Furnivall, B., 1862.

Gross. C. Gross, *Sources and Literature of English History from the earliest Times to about 1485*, L., 1900.

Harv. St. N. Harvard *Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, Boston, 1892 ff.

Hazlitt Rem. *Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England*, ed. W. Carew Hazlitt, 4 vols., L., 1864-66.

Hist. Litt. *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, P., 1733-1898.

Horstmann. *Altenglische Legenden*, etc., ed. Carl Horstmann, Paderborn, 1875; *Sammlung altenglischer Legenden*, Heilbronn, 1878; *Altenglische Legenden, Neue Folge*, Heilbronn, 1881 (referred to under the respective dates).

Laing. *Early Metrical Tales*, ed. David Laing, Edin., 1826; *Early Popular Poetry of Scotland*, etc., rev. W. C. Hazlitt, 2 vols., L., 1895; *A Penniworth of Witte*, etc. (Auch. MS. poems), Abbot., 1857 (referred to under respective dates).

Madden. *Syr Gawayne, a Collection*, etc., ed. Sir Frederic Madden, L., Bannatyne Club, 1839.

Mait. Maitland Club Publications, Edin., 1830 ff.

Mätzner. *Altenglische Sprachproben*, ed. E. Mätzner, B., 1867.

Mod. L. N. *Modern Language Notes*, ed. A. M. Elliott et al., Balt., 1886 ff.

P. B. Beit. *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, ed. Hermann Paul and Wilhelm Braune, Halle, 1874 ff.

P. F. MS. *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, ed. J. W. Hales and F. J. Furnivall, L., 1867-69.

Percy Soc. Percy Society Publications, L., 1840-52.

Philol. Soc. Philological Society Transactions, L., 1854 ff.

Pub. M. L. A. *Publications of the Mod. Lang. Association of America*, ed. A. M. Elliott, Balt., 1884 ff.; J. W. Bright, 1893 ff.; C. H. Grandgent, Cambridge, Mass., 1902 ff.

Radcl. M. *Radcliffe College Monographs*, Boston, 1891 ff.

Rel. Ant. *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, ed. T. Wright and J. O. Halliwell, L., 1845.

Ritson. *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, ed. Joseph Ritson, 3 vols., L., 1802; revised ed. E. Goldsmid, Edin., 1884. (The revised edition is referred to because now more accessible.)

Ritson, A. S. *Ancient Songs from the Time of King Henry III. to the Revolution*, L., 1790; rev. ed. W. C. Hazlitt, 5 vols., L., 1877. (Revised edition referred to.)

Robson. *Three Early English Metrical Romances*, ed. John Robson, L., 1842.

Rom. *Romania*, ed. P. Meyer and Gaston Paris, P., 1872 ff.; ed. P. Meyer and A. Thomas, 1902 ff.

Roxb. Roxburghe Club Publications, L., 1814 ff.

S. A. T. F. Société des anciens textes français Publications, P., 1875 ff.

Sc. T. S. Scottish Text Society Publications, Edin., 1884 ff.

Thoms. *A Collection of Early Prose Romances*, ed. W. J. Thoms, L., 1828.

Thorn. Roms. *The Thornton Romances*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, Camd., 1844.

Ward. H. L. D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the British Museum*, 2 vols., L., 1883-93.

Weber. *Metrical Romances of the XIII., XIV., and XV. Centuries*, ed. Henry Weber, 3 vols., Edin., 1810.

Wright, P.S. *Political Songs of England, from the Reign of John to that of Edward II.*, ed. T. Wright, Camd., L., 1839; E. Goldsmid, Edin., 1884.

Wright, P.P. *Political Poems and Songs from the Accession of Edward III. to that of Richard III.*, ed. T. Wright, Rolls Series, L., 1859-61.

Wright, A.L. *Anecdota Literaria*, ed. T. Wright, L., 1844.

Wright, S.L.P. *Specimens of Lyric Poetry composed in England in the Reign of Edward I.*, ed. T. Wright, L., 1842.

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Abbreviations of names of places: Balt., Baltimore; B., Berlin; Edin., Edinburgh; L., London; Leip., Leipzig; N.Y., New York; Oxf., Oxford; P., Paris.

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